



JOYCE
OF THE JASMINES
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR









JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

ILLUSTRATED ROMANCES
BY RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

KITTY OF THE ROSES

With illustrations in color by
FREDERIC J. VON RAPP

AN ORCHARD PRINCESS

With illustrations in color by
JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

A MAID IN ARCADY

With illustrations in color by
FREDERIC J. VON RAPP

HOLLY

With illustrations in color by
EDWIN F. BAYHA

MY LADY OF THE FOG

With illustrations in color by
CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD

THE LILAC GIRL

With illustrations in color by
CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD

THE GOLDEN HEART

With illustrations in color by
CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD

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SHE WAS SMILING A STRANGE LITTLE SMILE FULL OF SECRET THINGS

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JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

By

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF

"KITTY OF THE ROSES," "AN ORCHARD PRINCESS," "A
MAID IN ARCADY," "HOLLY," "MY LADY OF
THE FOG," "THE LILAC GIRL," "THE
GOLDEN HEART," ETC.

With Illustrations in Color by

CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD

and Decorations by

EDWARD STRATTON HOLLOWAY



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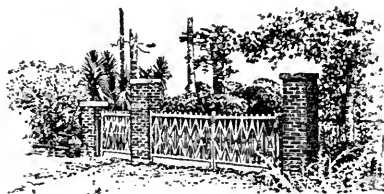
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To

A. V. B. F.



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JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

I.

THIS story, such as it is, opens naïvely with a dialogue between a Man and a Fly. Presently another Man appears on the scene. Subsequently the Author, with amazing originality, introduces a Woman. Whereupon the tale proceeds leisurely to its conclusion, leaving the Reader to ask himself, with a shrug of his shoulders, why he has read it.

After which Prologue—an apparently frank and generous warning to intending Readers, but in reality a crafty and calculating attempt to induce perusal by whetting the curiosity and prodding the Imp of Contrariety that dwells in even the wisest and noblest of us—the Author retires behind the curtain and the bell tinkles.



II.

Bzzz -- zzz -- zzz!

That was the Fly.

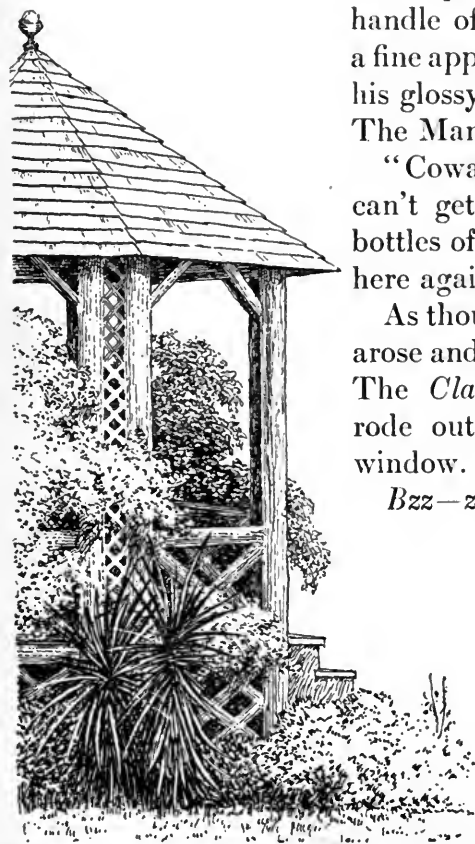
"Oh, get to the deuce out of here!"

That was the Man. He spoke querulously and smote the air in front of him vindictively but weakly with a folded copy of the *Ridge Clarion*. The Fly dipped warily out of the path of destruction and settled on the handle of the nearest teaspoon, where, with a fine appearance of indifference, he groomed his glossy blue-green body with nimble legs. The Man stared at him scowlingly.

"Coward! You know very well that I can't get you there without upsetting two bottles of medicine. I dare you to come over here again!"

As though accepting the challenge, the Fly arose and charged straight at the Man's face. The *Clarion* waved frantically. The Fly rode out of the storm and veered to the window.

Bzz -- zzz!



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There was a certain monotony in the Fly's conversation, but the Man, after an experience extending over a good half-hour, had learned that the same remark may convey various meanings, and it was as plain as daylight that in the present instance the Fly was expressing ridicule, and mingling it with ironic laughter. The Man glared for a space, wondering whether the pleasure of extinguishing Mr. Blue Bottle would repay for the exertion entailed in getting up from his arm-chair and covering the two yards of straw matting intervening between chair and window. The Fly had begun the ascent of the middle pane. He climbed very carefully but very determinedly, as though he had suddenly made up his mind to break the existing window-climbing record. The Man forgot his sanguinary project and watched interestedly.

"Bet you five to three you don't make it," he muttered.

"Take you," said the Fly.

And at that very instant he lost his hold and plunged headlong to the sill.

"Huh!" jeered the Man. What the Fly



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said was unfit for publication, as, legs waving in air, he spun around on his back in a veritable tempest of chagrin and anger and profanity.

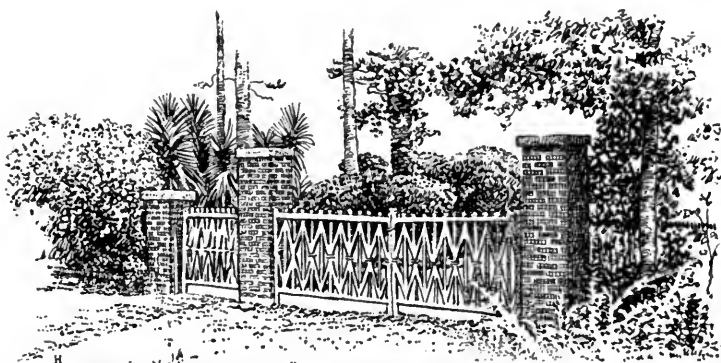
"I'll give you another try," said the Man generously. "Go ahead if you're a real sportsman."

The Fly stopped buzzing and spinning and gesticulating and thought it over. Then he calmly turned himself right side up, rubbed his hind legs together—evidently a preliminary indulged in by all flies before attempting difficult feats—and started over again.

"Give you two to one this time," said the Man encouragingly. The Fly was nettled; that was plain to be seen; and he made the mistake of trying to rush things, with the result that he speedily found himself once more spinning ignominiously on the sill.

"Fool!" said the Man. "Of course you couldn't do it that way."

"Fool yourself!" buzzed the Fly indignantly. "Let's see *you* walk up a window-pane!"



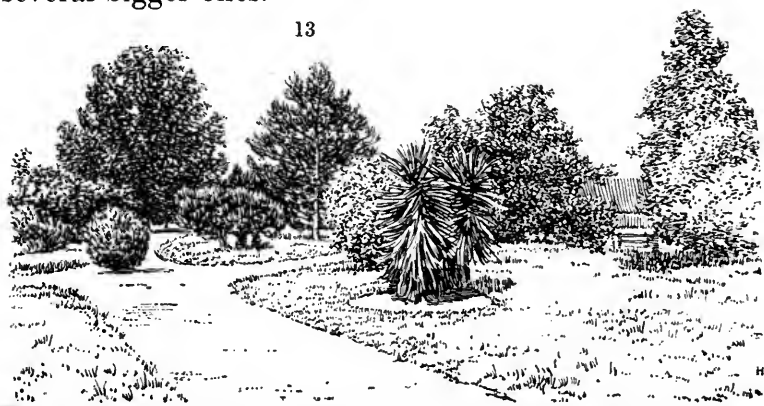
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"Could if I had stickum on my feet, you duffer."

"Poppycock!" returned the Fly, dexterously righting himself. "Why, you can't walk across the room without holding on to things."

"Neither could you if you had rheumatism in your knees and felt as though you'd been run over and over and over by a steam-roller."

There was no reply to this. The Fly crawled to a corner of the window-sill and sulked. For a moment the Man experienced mildly the satisfaction of one who has bettered an opponent in an argument. But the satisfaction was short-lived, for in moving his legs under the bath-robe which covered them he received such a twinge that his former irritability returned on the instant. He said "Ouch!" very crossly, and followed it with a less innocent and more forceful word that brought a buzz of outraged protest from the Fly. But the Man wasn't thinking of the Fly any longer. The Fly was one very small trouble and the Man had several bigger ones.



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In the first place, his heart had been recently broken. To you, Sir or Madame, who have perhaps attained to the experience-ripened age of, let us say, thirty-six, this may not sound serious. I fancy I even detect a smile on your face. But pray let me remind you that at twenty-six, which was the Man's exact age, having one's heart broken is no laughing matter! It's very likely to be the first casualty of the sort, and, with no previous fractures to compare it to, it is both novel and annoying. Perhaps you recall how different your first toothache was from all the subsequent ones. If you do you have saved me further explanations.

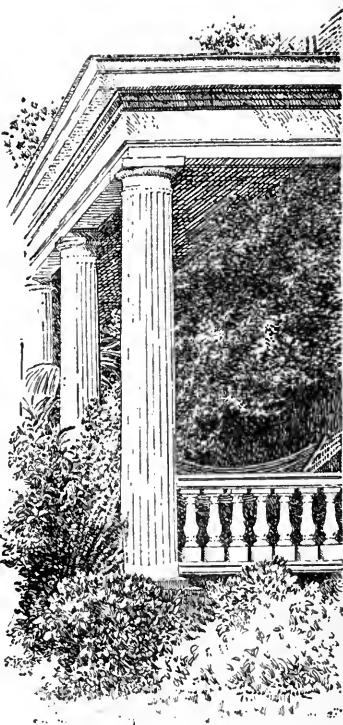
The Man knew that his heart was broken because, although he had had no previous experience, all the novels he had ever read and all the plays he had ever seen had informed him that when a chap's sweetheart throws him over, a broken heart is the invariable result. Ever since the seventeenth of January he had been assuring himself that he was very unhappy and that there was little left to live for. To be sure, as time went on he told himself so less frequently,



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but even now, almost two months after the Blow, he had only to think for the barest minute in order to recall the fact of his blighted existence.

There is no use in denying, though, that for the past month the broken heart had had to play second fiddle. When it comes to real downright misery a bad case of grippe can give a broken heart cards and spades. And the Man had had just about as bad an attack of grippe as the Old Doctor had ever treated. There had been a fortnight of sick-a-bedness followed by a week of languorous don't-care-if-I-never-get-well-ness, and then, just when the South Carolina spring sunshine and warmth should have completed the cure, there had been three days of unseasonable cold, three damp, cloudy, blustery days which winter had mislaid and which had to be worked in somewhere because if they hadn't been the year would have been only three hundred and sixty-two days long and the folks that make calendars would have gone quite crazy. Just what had happened even the Old Doctor couldn't say, but one beastly morning the

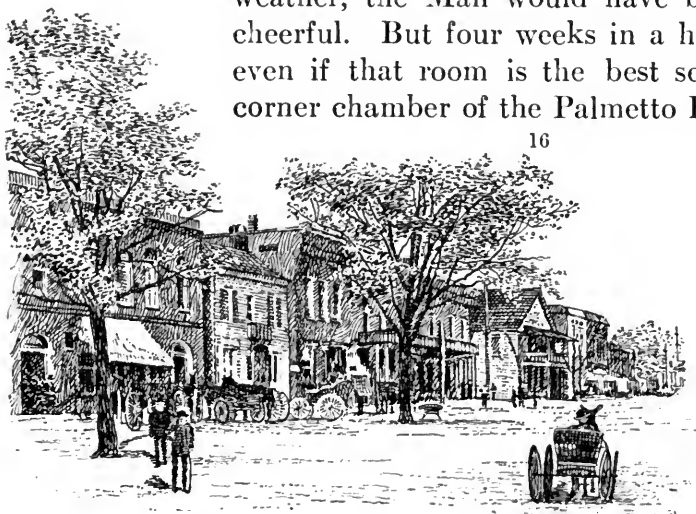


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Man awoke to find that his knees and his back were filled with hot, burny, shooty pains and that he was very unhappy. The Old Doctor said it was rheumatism, and the Man irritably asked how it could be rheumatism when he had never had rheumatism in his life. And the Old Doctor had remarked dryly while looking through his case for something that wasn't there—it was peculiar of the Old Doctor that he seldom did have at hand the particular thing needed—the Old Doctor had remarked that he had just closed the eyes of a man who had never died before!

“Well,” the Man had said after thinking that over a minute, “call it what you like, only get it out of me. I want to go home.”

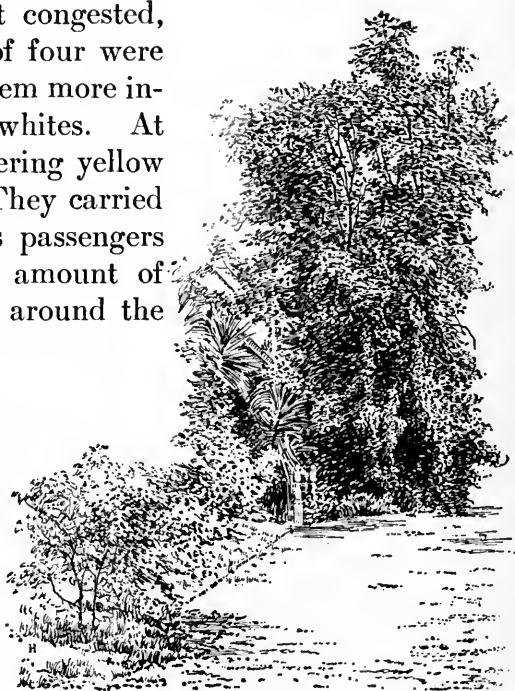
That had been five days ago, and this morning, although it wasn't all out, it was a whole lot better, and if the sun had been shining, as it should have been if you believe what they tell you about South Carolina weather, the Man would have been fairly cheerful. But four weeks in a hotel room, even if that room is the best second-floor corner chamber of the Palmetto House at a



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perfectly fabulous price, is about all any one can endure with equanimity; and the Man's equanimity was getting threadbare.

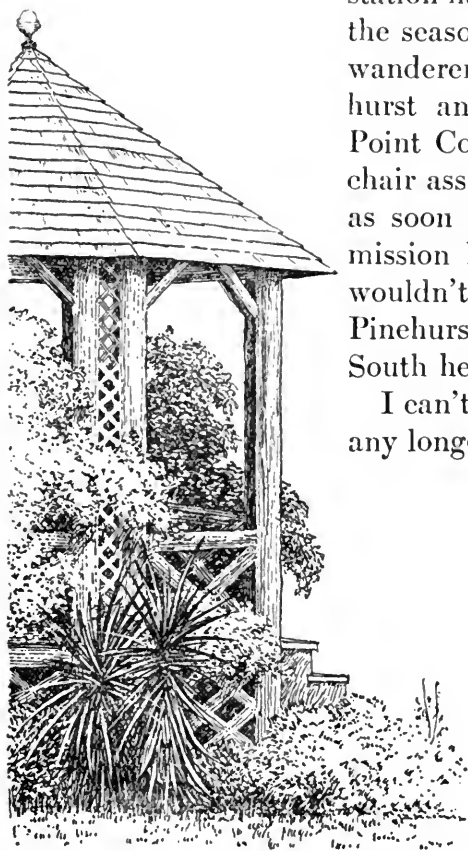
The room was big and square and nicely furnished, and there were three wide windows in it, two looking out on Park Street, which is the main residential thoroughfare of Ridge, and one on Main Street, which is the principal artery of trade. The Man's chair was set where he could see the business street and yet far enough from the window so that no wandering breeze could get to him. He liked the Main Street window because through it he could see half of the road and nearly a block of sidewalk and stores, and there was always something to look at when he got tired of reading. Except on Saturdays Main Street was not congested, and always three persons out of four were negroes. But the Man found them more interesting to watch than the whites. At thirty-minute periods big lumbering yellow trolley cars passed the hotel. They carried freight and baggage as well as passengers and made a most astounding amount of noise as they eased themselves around the



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corner of Park Street on their way to or from the station. Their sides bore the legend "Ridge and Augusta," and the Man had reached a point where to have boarded one of them and gone swaying and buzzing off to Augusta would have seemed the acme of human happiness. Just before and just after train time the bus from the big hotel outside of town rolled by, carrying well-dressed men and women and small, shiny, black hand-bags and big, be-labelled suit-cases and slim-waisted golf-bags. For the last week or so the bus coming from the station had passed with fewer occupants, for the season was on the wane and the winter wanderers were flitting northward to Pinehurst and Virginia Hot Springs and Old Point Comfort. And the Man in the arm-chair assured himself emphatically that just as soon as the Old Doctor gave him permission he would join the flitters, only he wouldn't be idiot enough to stop off at Pinehurst or Old Point; he'd had all the South he wanted!

I can't see any reason for referring to him any longer as the Man. He had a perfectly



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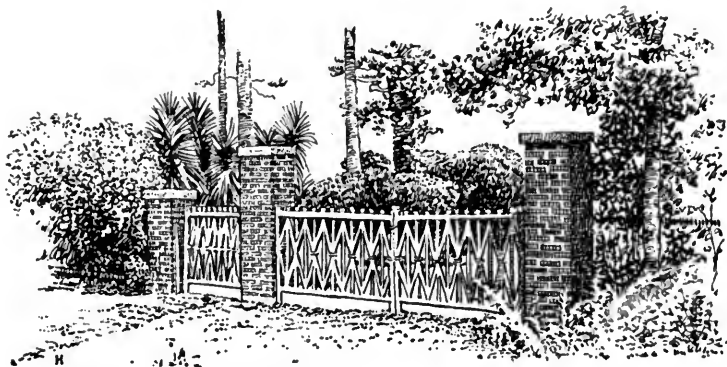
good name, which was Philip Gaston Weld, and the only thing he had ever done that he was really ashamed of was this having rheumatism at twenty-six and being obliged to remain doing nothing in a hotel room down south when he might have been doing nothing at home in New York. For I've got to acknowledge that doing nothing was a specialty of Philip's, nothing, that is, but getting a good deal of fun out of life. He danced well, played tennis fairly and golf like a professional, and in the old, old days—now five years past—had played tackle on two champion Yale elevens. The reason he did nothing more useful was that there was altogether too much money in the family and Philip had never discovered anything that promised to interest him. You see, Philip's father was one of those things called a capitalist, and as being a capitalist is not exactly a profession Philip couldn't very well follow in his father's footsteps; or at least not as long as his father was living. I'm sorry that my hero is a member of what we term the idle rich class, for of course the reader will naturally form an immediate prejudice



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against him. But nowadays when so many of our really nice people *are* wealthy it is getting very difficult to find a hero who is at once properly poor and decently engaging.

I've delayed attempting any description of the young gentleman's physical appearance for the reason that in order to do so it is absolutely necessary to make use of the word *athletic*, a word I personally entertain a strong dislike for. If I could have had my way my hero should have been not wealthy and, above all, *not* athletic. But even authors can't always be choosers, and in the present case I must make the best of a bad job. And so, to be honest, my hero *was* athletic, not only so in fact but in appearance; not the phenomenally beefy, broad-shouldered sort of athletic, but the rather slim, well-conditioned, clear-eyed kind. The eyes were brown and the hair was brown and the clean-shaven face was still slightly brown, in spite of a month's illness; and there was a good-humored little crease at each corner of the mouth and a glint of laughter at the back of the brown eyes in spite of his peevishness; and, after all, if you can only forget the fact



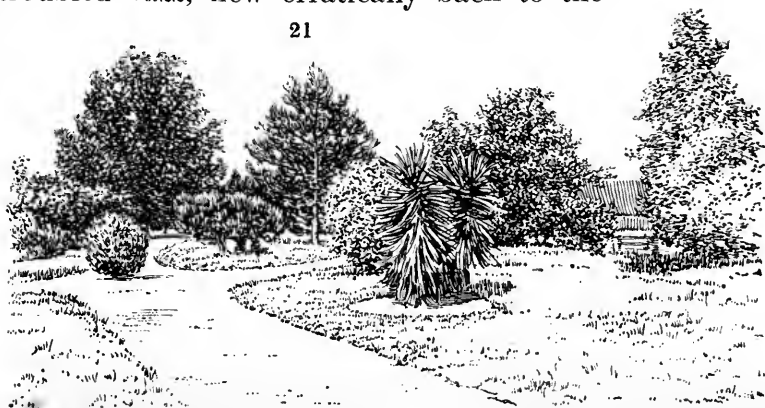
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that he had more money than was good for him, why, perhaps you may get to liking him after all. And I *do* hope you will try.

Philip looked at his watch, which lay on the chair flanked by medicine bottles, saw that it was ten o'clock and picked up a teaspoon distastefully. The noise disturbed the Fly and he came circling over to investigate. Philip paused, teaspoon in one hand and bottle in the other, and addressed him severely.

"Now I give you fair warning. You come monkeying around me any more and I'll fix you for good even if I have to chase you all around the room. Mind, I don't want murder on my soul, but you don't know when to quit, you don't, and if you drive me to—insecticide—— Confound you, *get out!*"

The Fly settled on the mouth of the bottle and sampled the mixture. Philip watched grimly. The Fly liked the taste and tried it again. Then he paused, rubbed his wings reflectively with his hind legs, walked slowly around the rim, started to go on with the feast, thought better of it and, with a troubled *buzz*, flew erratically back to the



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window, bumped squarely against the glass and fell to the sill. There he turned around twice on his back, buzzing drowsily, and then passed from this life and this story.

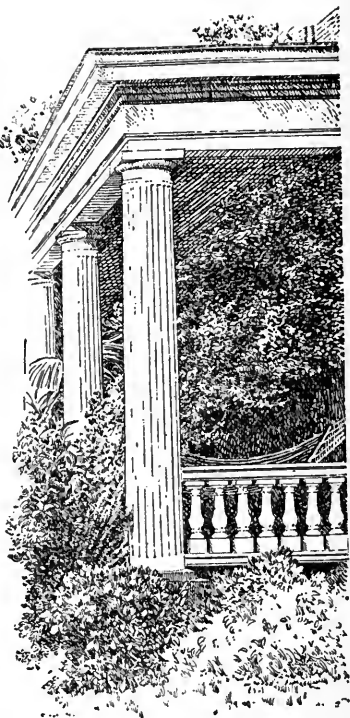
Philip looked thoughtfully at the medicine bottle for a moment and set it down with a shake of his head. And at that instant there was a knock at the door and the Old Doctor entered.



III.

THE patient who isn't cheered to some extent by his physician's advent is pretty sick. In the present case the patient perked up at once; straightened himself in his chair; smiled welcomingly and said "Hello, Doctor!" with a heartiness that told its own story. For Philip liked the Old Doctor thoroughly. You see, the Old Doctor was a man first and a physician afterwards. He was half-way between fifty and sixty, tall and thin, with high cheek-bones under a ruddy, weather-tanned face, sharp, steady, kindly eyes of no particular color, under heavy grizzled eyebrows, a broad mouth hidden by a straggling gray mustache, a nose that might have belonged to that Roman general whose name he bore, and a good deal of once black hair, now liberally threaded with white.

Doctor Cassius Mayberry was known as the Old Doctor because there was always a Young Doctor in Ridge. There had been four in the Old Doctor's time. Also, during

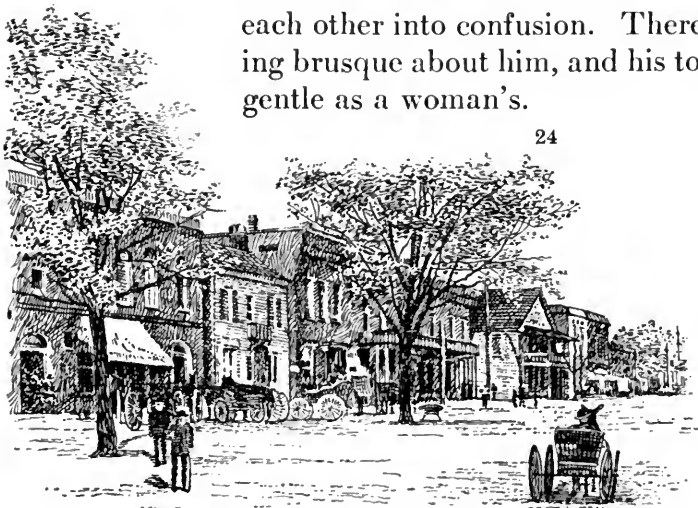


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the short season from January to April, when Northerners filled the two hotels and occupied dazzling white and green palaces or bungalows along the Cold Springs Road, there were other doctors, Court Physicians to the Kings and Queens of Fashion, but Ridge didn't count those. Ridge owned allegiance to the Old Doctor, who lived a mile outside of town on what remained of Mayberry Plantation, and to the Young Doctor, whose black-and-gilt sign swung over the gate of a spick-and-span residence placed, with unfortunate suggestiveness, directly across the street from the cemetery.

The Old Doctor set down his bag, threw off his long black cloak—it had frayed silk frogs in lieu of buttons—and drew a chair up to the patient.

“Well, sir, and how are we this morning?” he asked as his long fingers found Philip's pulse. The Old Doctor's voice was deep and soft, and his words came out slowly and didn't tread on each other's heels and jostle each other into confusion. There was nothing brusque about him, and his touch was as gentle as a woman's.





"I'D HAVE SAID YOU WERE BETTER"



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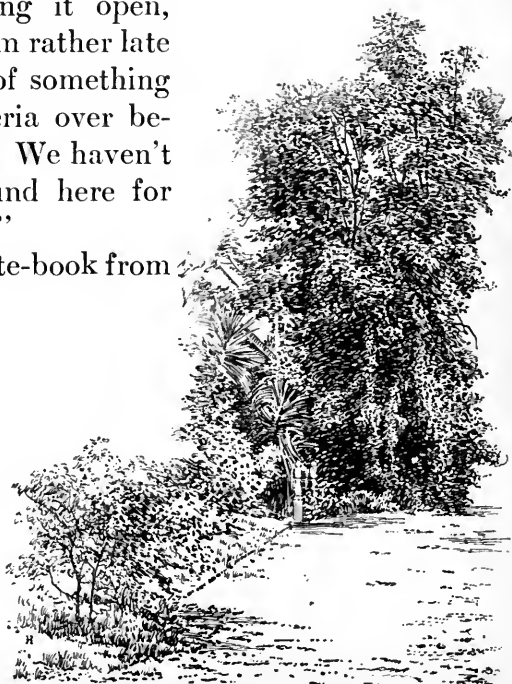
"Rotten," said Philip inelegantly.

"Hum," said the Old Doctor, producing his thermometer. "I'd have said you were better. How about the knees and back?"

"Oh, I guess they're not so bad as they were, if this confounded weather——"

"Under the tongue, please. That's it." The Old Doctor settled back and viewed his patient smilingly and shrewdly. "We'll have some sun for you to-morrow, Mr. Weld. I don't know when we've had so many cloudy days as we have had this spring. I wouldn't wonder if it brightened up this evening, though. I see by the Augusta paper that they're having another touch of winter up your way; an inch of snow in northern New York yesterday. It's been a strange spring, sir; very." He drew an old-fashioned watch from his pocket, sprung it open, studied it, snapped it shut. "I'm rather late this morning. There's a case of something that looks mighty like diphtheria over beyond the railroad. I hope not. We haven't had a case of diphtheria around here for some time. And I don't like it."

He took a little red leather note-book from



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a pocket and made a note in it with a stub of a pencil. Then, replacing those, he reached for the thermometer and studied it with close-drawn brows.

"Not bad," he announced. "A little more temperature than yesterday." He pulled his long length from the chair and walked across to the washstand. "What have you had to eat?" he asked as he poured water into the basin. Philip told him.

"Taste good, did it?"

"No."

"Hum. Been worrying about anything?"

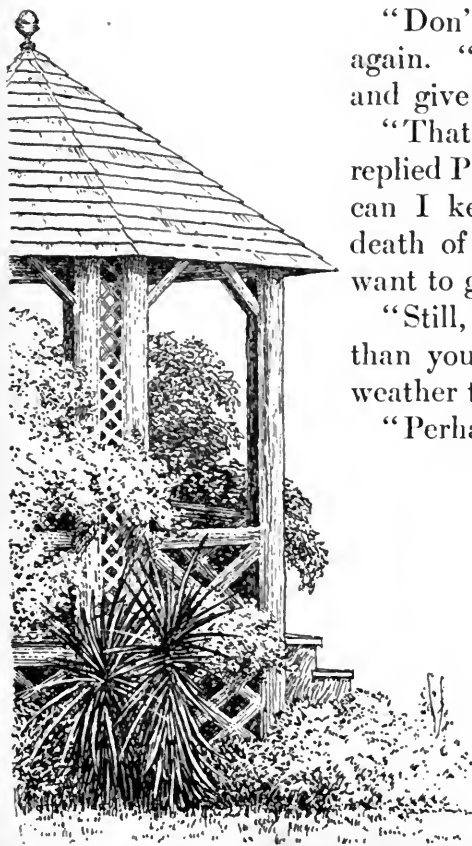
"No—yes, a little, I guess."

"Don't." The Old Doctor seated himself again. "Don't worry. Keep the mind easy and give the medicine a chance."

"That's all well enough for you to say," replied Philip ruefully, "but how the dickens can I keep my mind easy? I'm sick to death of this hole. I want to get out. I want to go home!"

"Still, you're better off here, Mr. Weld, than you would be up there with the bad weather they're having."

"Perhaps; but I don't see that the weather



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here is anything to go crazy over. How soon do you think I can go, Doctor?"

"Well, I reckon you *could* start to-morrow——"

"Honest?"

"But I wouldn't advise it. You'd most likely get chilled on the train and this rheumatism might take a new hold and stay right with you for a good long time. If I was you I'd make up my mind to get well rid of it before I left."

"How long will it take?" asked Philip morosely.

"I can't say, sir. Perhaps another week, perhaps longer. If the weather settles down nice and warm, as I reckon it will in a day or two, you ought to be out and around, and that's the best medicine you can have. Pretty comfortable here, are you?"

"Oh, I suppose so. The food's all right, only you won't let me have what I like, and I'm not hungry anyway. And I don't see any one but you and the nigger servants. It isn't exactly exciting. Yesterday a mule-team ran away and I nearly had heart-failure. If I could get out of doors it would



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help. And even tobacco doesn't taste like anything and I don't get any pleasure out of smoking."

The Old Doctor laughed.

"Seems like your best friend had turned his back on you, don't it, when your pipe don't taste right? Well, now, Mr. Weld, I've been thinking. I reckon this place *is* getting pretty stale to you; a hotel isn't like a home at any time. What I think is just this, sir; you ought to get out of here and into the country, where there's no dust and no train smoke, and where you could get out of doors without going up and down stairs. What do you say to that?"

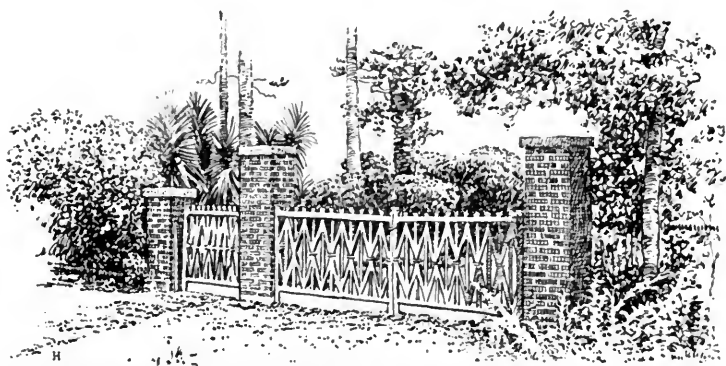
Philip looked doubtful.

"Well, frankly, I'd give a lot to get away from here, but if you're thinking of the other hotel——"

"No, I was thinking of a private house, sir."

"Oh, I'd be a nuisance in a private family, Doctor; I'm too peevish to want strange faces just now. Besides, I never could stand those country boarding-houses."

"Well, this isn't exactly a boarding-house



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that I'm thinking of, Mr. Weld," replied the Old Doctor with a twinkle. "It's a strictly private place about a mile out of town. And as for strange faces, why, you wouldn't see many, sir; there's just two in the family. And one of 'em 's away a good deal and wouldn't bother you much, I reckon."

"Where is it?" asked Philip.

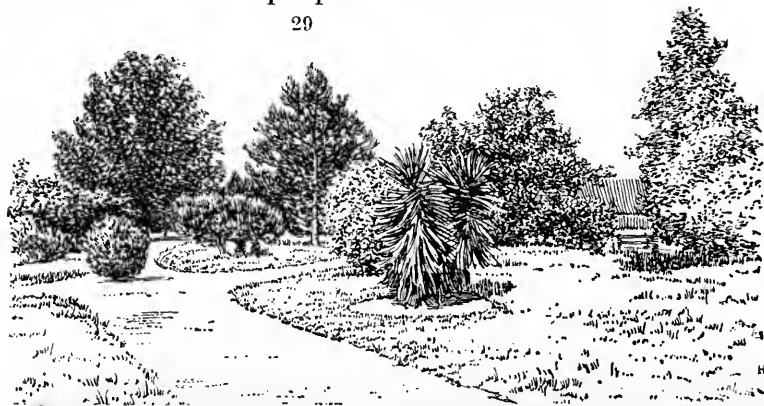
"Out on the Augusta road, sir, not more than a mile from where we're sitting."

"On the Augusta Road? You live out that way, don't you? It would be handy for you, anyway, wouldn't it?" Philip reflected a moment. Then, "You don't think I ought to go North yet?" he asked.

"No, Mr. Weld, I don't."

"Well, all right. Then I'll try this place you speak of. But I want you to tell them that they must make the price high enough so that I can feel free to be just as nasty and irritable as I darn please. When can I go?"

"To-morrow morning if the weather's bright. I reckon I'd better tell you, though, that you aren't going out there as a boarder, Mr. Weld. These people have never taken



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boarders and I reckon they wouldn't know just how to go about it."

Philip stared.

"You mean that I can't pay? What sort of a place is it, in Heaven's name? Look here, you aren't talking about an insane asylum, are you? Or the county jail?"

The Old Doctor smiled.

"I'm talking about Mayberry, Mr. Weld. That's where I'm going to take you. We'll get you on your feet in no time, sir, out there in the fresh air and the sunshine."

"By Jove, that's fine of you, Doctor, and I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate it. It's simply—it's simply mighty white, sir, but I couldn't think of plumping myself down on you like that. I'll do all right here until I can go home, Doctor. This isn't nearly so bad as I've been making out. And when the weather gets over sulking——"

"What's your reason, sir, for refusing my invitation?"

"Why—why, hang it, Doctor, I couldn't let you be bothered with a cranky chap like me, a perfect stranger, too! It would be absurd."

"That your only reason, sir?"



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"Why yes, I—I guess so. Seems to me that's sufficient."

"Then I'll take you out in the morning, Mr. Weld."

"No you don't! There are lots of other reasons."

"Let's hear them."

"Well, there's—there's the difficulty of—of— Hang it all, don't you understand that I'd want to pay my way?"

"Mr. Weld, sir, do you always pay board and room-rent in the North when you visit your friends?"

"That's all well enough, Doctor Mayberry," returned Philip stubbornly, "but I'm not a friend of yours—in that way, I mean. I'm just a patient—and not any too patient at that, sir. I don't see why you should want to be bothered with me as a guest at your house. It would make a lot of trouble; now wouldn't it?"

"Not a bit. Come, come, Mr. Weld, don't make so much of it. If it's going to give me pleasure to entertain you for a week or so and you can put up with what Mayberry offers, why not humor me, sir. Eh?"



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Philip felt foolishly embarrassed. He had received a good many invitations to visit folks—some of whom he had really known less intimately than he knew the Old Doctor—but the present invitation was unique in his experience. He wished heartily that he could think of some plausible excuse that would not give offence. And, oddly enough, it was the Old Doctor that supplied one even while Philip was hesitating.

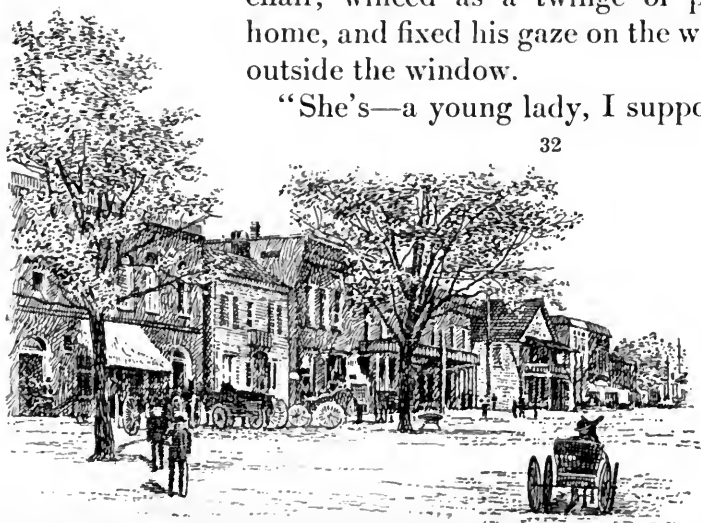
“As I remarked, Mr. Weld, there are only two of us at Mayberry, my niece and myself, and you won’t have to see either of us all day long unless you feel like it.”

“Your niece, Doctor?” Philip frowned slightly.

“Yes, Miss Joyce Mayberry, my brother’s child. He died some years ago in Pensacola and Joyce has been living with me ever since. Don’t know what I’d do without her, Mr. Weld.”

Philip changed his position in the arm-chair, winced as a twinge of pain struck home, and fixed his gaze on the wistaria vine outside the window.

“She’s—a young lady, I suppose?”



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"Why, yes, Joyce is nineteen."

There was a pause. Then,

"Doctor," said Philip soberly, "you may think I'm kind of crazy, but, the fact is, I—I've taken a dislike to feminine society."

"I understand," replied the Old Doctor sympathetically, with a nod. Philip turned to view him in some surprise.

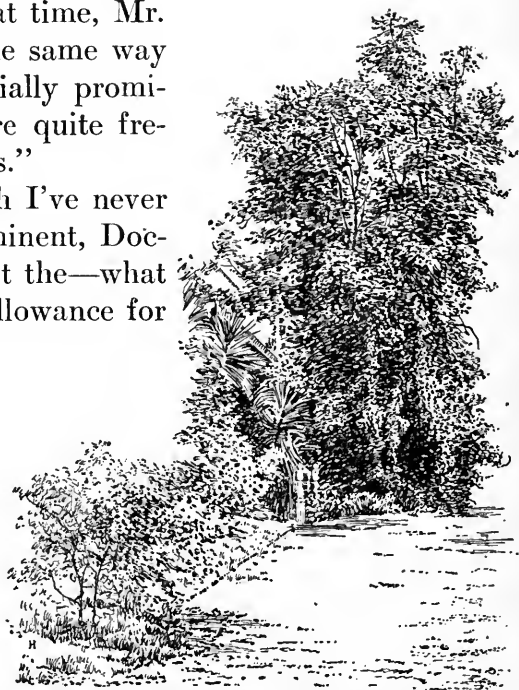
"Do you? I don't see why you should."

"Why, Mr. Weld, I don't want to bring up an unpleasant subject, sir, but—er—I happened to see in one of your New York papers some time ago that—er——" The Old Doctor faltered.

"That an engagement between Miss Warren and me had been broken off?"

"Quite so, Mr. Weld. I hadn't the pleasure of your acquaintance at that time, Mr. Weld, but I knew of you in the same way that I know of other—er—socially prominent folks, sir, whose names are quite frequently mentioned in the papers."

"I see," said Philip, "though I've never considered myself socially prominent, Doctor. But since you know about the—what you do, perhaps you'll make allowance for



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my—my prejudice.” Philip achieved a very creditable imitation of melancholy, and felt a qualm of conscience over his duplicity. The Old Doctor nodded again.

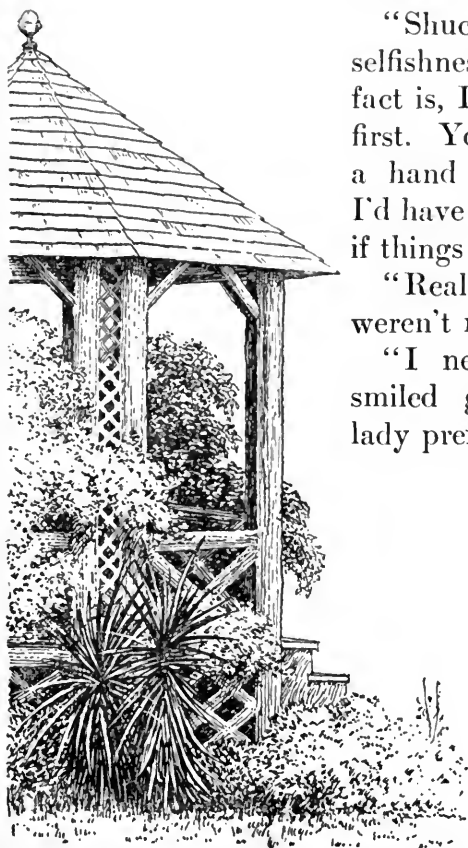
“Of course, sir, if you feel that way about it I reckon there’s no more to be said.” He glanced at his watch. “But it does seem sort of too bad that you can’t have the benefit of the change.”

“Well, I can’t begin to tell you, Doctor, how much I appreciate your asking me out there. I’ve heard all my life of Southern hospitality, sir, but I never ran against it before.”

“Shucks,” said the Old Doctor, “pure selfishness, Mr. Weld, that’s all it is. The fact is, I just took a liking to you from the first. You see, sir,”—the Old Doctor laid a hand on Philip’s shoulder—“I reckon I’d have had a boy mighty close to your age if things had gone just right.”

“Really? I had an idea that—that you weren’t married, sir.”

“I never was, Mr. Weld, but—” he smiled gently—“I wanted to be. The lady preferred some one else, and I reckon



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she chose wisely. I was sort of oldish for her, most thirty then. She selected a better man and has been very happy, I'm pleased to say; has raised a large family and has never wanted for anything. That has always been a great joy to me, Mr. Weld."

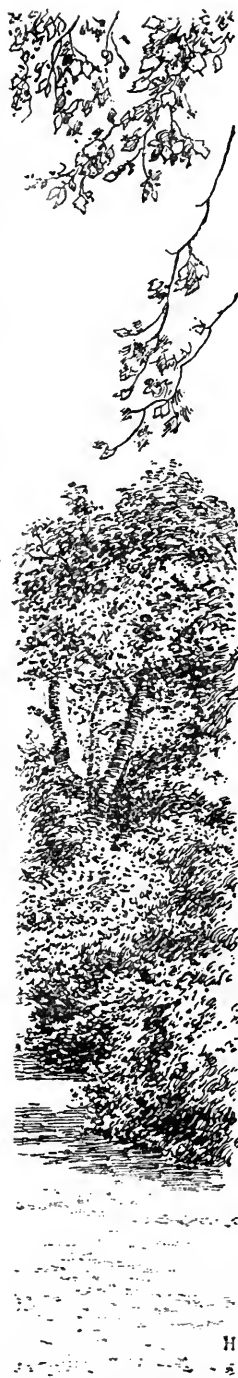
The Old Doctor sat with a hand on each bony knee and gazed smilingly through the window.

"I call that mighty unselfish," said Philip. "I'm afraid if it were me I'd be better pleased if things hadn't turned out so well for the lady."

"No, sir, you wouldn't," replied the other firmly. "You're a gentleman, Mr. Weld, a thorough gentleman. I saw that weeks ago. A doctor soon knows the real from the shoddy. I've often thought, sir, that you ought to have been a South——" The Old Doctor stopped in dismay and sorrow. "Tut, tut, tut!" he clicked. Philip laughed.

"It's all right, Doctor. It's a real compliment."

"No, no, I oughtn't to have said such a thing, sir. It—it just shows, I reckon, that I'm getting toward my dotage. Dear,



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dear! Why, I have been personally acquainted with a large number of most excellent Northern gentlemen, Mr. Weld."

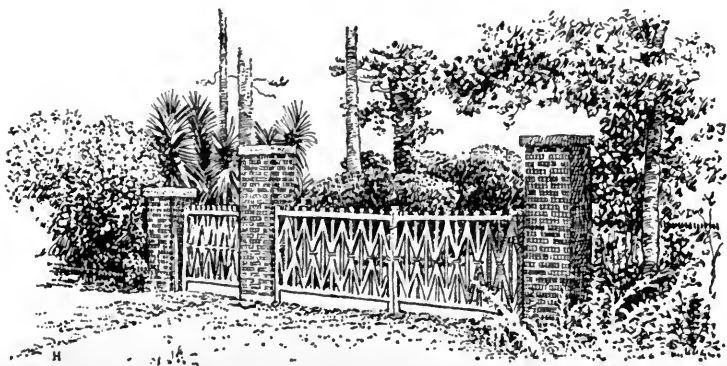
"We have all sorts up our way, sir. Maybe if I'm what you call a thorough gentleman it isn't through any special virtue of mine, sir. I've got the best father and the finest mother in the world, Doctor, and I've had everything smoothed out for me all my life so far. I dare say it isn't so easy to look like a gentleman and act like one when you have to hustle for yourself."

The Old Doctor shook his head thoughtfully.

"Looking and acting aren't what count, though, Mr. Weld. I mean there's a heap of polished villains that look like gentlemen and act like 'em, but aren't. It's a matter of breeding, sir; it's in the blood."

"Don't altogether agree with you there, Doctor."

"No? Well, we'll have to thresh it out some time. I wish, though, I wish you were coming out to Mayberry, Mr. Weld. I'm almost sorry I mentioned my niece. It's a right sharp disappointment to me, sir; I've



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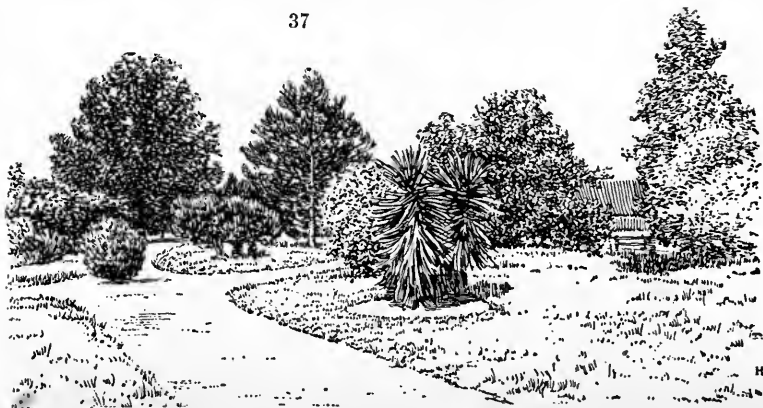
had it on my mind for a fortnight. 'Soon as he's well enough to ride out,' I've been saying, 'I'll have him at Mayberry.' However, I wouldn't want you to come if you were going to be—er—uncomfortable, and I reckon you would."

Philip frowned a moment in silence. Then,

"Why, confound it, Doctor, I don't see why I shouldn't go," he said impulsively. "Goodness knows I'm sick to death of this place, and as for being uncomfortable at your house, why, that's nonsense. I'd love it, I know. So, if you'll forget what I said before, why, I'll accept your invitation gladly, and thank you for it."

"You will? Good enough, Mr. Weld!" The Old Doctor rubbed the knees of his already somewhat shiny trousers and beamed his pleasure. "We'll look after you so well that you'll be on your feet in no time. And as for Joyce, why, shucks, man, she ain't anything but a slip of a girl! Besides, I'll just tell her that you don't want to be bothered."

"For Heaven's sake don't do that, Doc-



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tor," Philip laughed. "I don't want her to think I'm a—an utter abject idiot. I'll be awfully glad to make her acquaintance, and I only hope she won't wish me out of the way after I've been there a day or so. I'm afraid my coming will make a lot of extra trouble for her."

"Shucks! Why, she was tickled to death, Mr. Weld, when I spoke of bringing you out; been after me ever since to know when you were coming. Don't you worry about her."

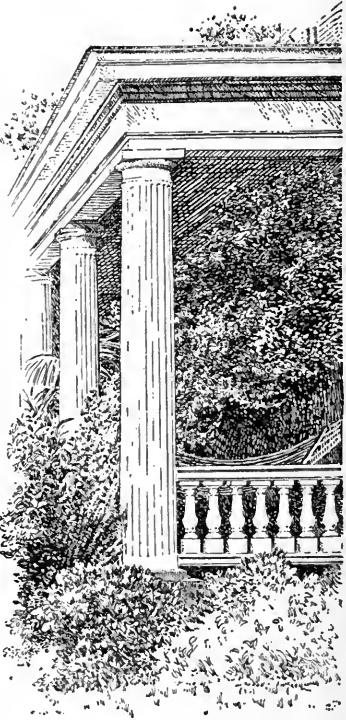
"That's very nice of her," murmured Philip. And then, fearing that the Old Doctor might detect a lack of enthusiasm, "Very nice indeed," he added.



IV.

It really was diphtheria "over beyond the railroad," and so it was fairly twilight when the Old Doctor turned into the lane at Mayberry. There was a young moon hanging over the trees and the air was velvet-soft and fragrant with wood-smoke and the odor of jasmine. It was the best hour of the day to the Old Doctor, the hour when in the window of house and cabin alike welcoming lights twinkle forth and the thought in the heart of the whole world is Home. His own lights gleamed ahead of him at the end of the oak-roofed lane, and Sanford, twelve years old and still good for his thirty miles a day when needed, pricked his ears and whinnied.

"Want your supper, do you?" asked the Old Doctor. "I reckon you've earned it, boy. It's a good world, Sanford, where there's light and food and welcome waiting us when the day's work's done, eh?" The Old Doctor raised his voice. "You Ajax!"



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"Here me, Marse Doctor," and a tall negro emerged from the shadow of the house as the buggy drew up at the mounting-block. "I hear you comin' way up the road, sir. You goin' to want him again?"

"No, I reckon not. Give him a good supper, Ajax."

"Deed, Marse Doctor, this horse always gets a good supper. Come on now, you. I goin' give you six years o' corn."

The broad doorway was darkened by a slim figure as the Old Doctor climbed the steps.

"Uncle Cass?"

"Yes, Little Lady."

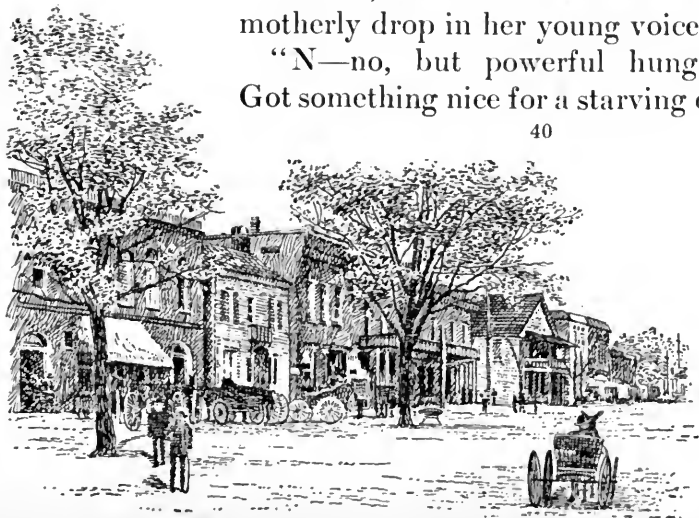
Joyce Mayberry stretched two slim round arms from post to post, barring the way.

"Halt, sir, and give the countersign."

The Old Doctor bent and kissed the up-turned face and the hands fell from the doorway, one of them gathering a fold of the old black cloak as the girl fell into step beside him.

"Tired, dear?" she asked with a quaint motherly drop in her young voice.

"N—no, but powerful hungry, Joyce. Got something nice for a starving old man?"



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Joyce helped him off with his cloak.

"I reckon there's a lil' bit o' bacon an' a crust o' co'nbread lef', Marse Mayberry." She had a trick of falling into darkey talk at times, a trick which the Old Doctor always found diverting and usually rewarded with a chuckle. Now he pretended disgust.

"What kind of rations is that for a hungry man, child? Most wished I'd stayed in town and gone to the Club with Tom Jordan."

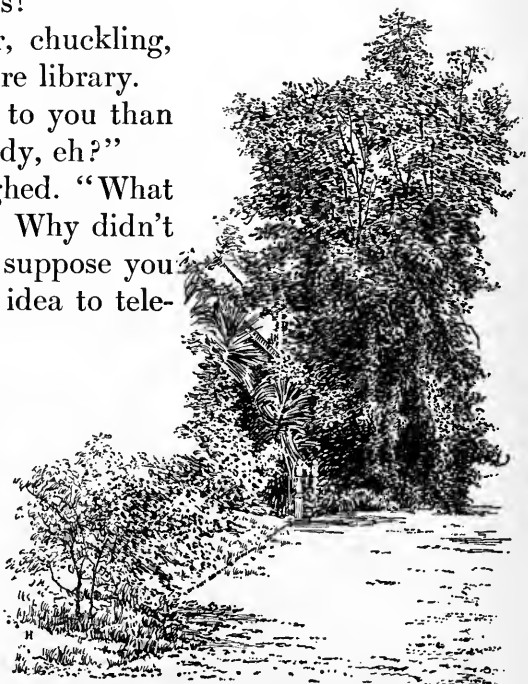
Joyce wagged a finger under his nose.

"What I done tell you ov' an' ovah?" she demanded sternly. "Ain' I tell you that yer Club ain' no place fo' you? Ain' I? Playin' cyards an' losin' all yo' money! Marse Doctor Mayberry, you sutnly does try ma patience, you sutnly does!"

He put an arm around her, chuckling, and drew her into the big square library.

"I reckon I'm more trouble to you than all your other uncles, Little Lady, eh?"

"Of course you are," she laughed. "What have you been doing all day? Why didn't you come home to dinner? I suppose you thought it was a very cunning idea to tele-



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phone at two o'clock that you wouldn't be home at one!"

The Doctor coughed.

"Er—did I? Was it as late as that, Joyce? My dear, I reckon I just kind of forgot all about dinner to-day. You see——"

"Haven't you had anything since breakfast?" she demanded in alarm. The Old Doctor shook his head meekly.

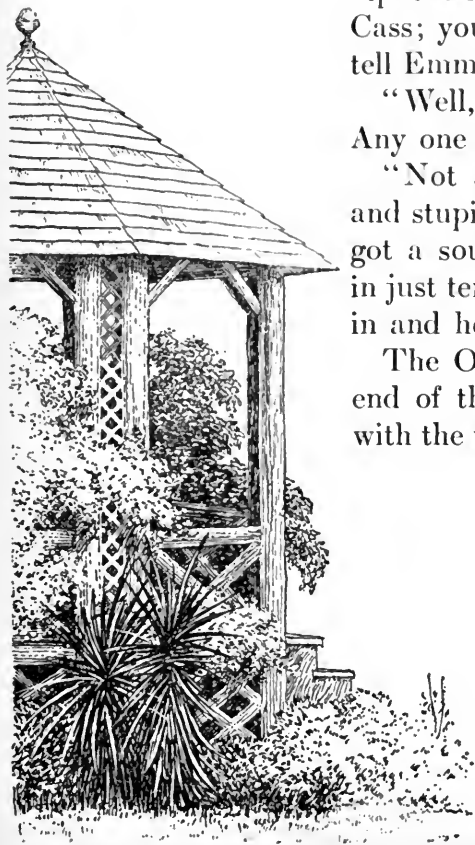
"You see, my dear, there's a case of diphtheria——"

"I don't care if there's fifty cases of diphtheria or—or yellow fever, Uncle Cass; you ought to have your dinner! I'll tell Emma to hurry supper."

"Well, and I'll go up and get ready. Any one call this afternoon?"

"Not a soul. And I've been very dull and stupid. Now hurry, please, for Emma's got a soufflé and if you're not down again in just ten minutes it's going to be all caved-in and horrid."

The Old Doctor was prompt and at the end of the time specified they were seated with the width of the round mahogany table



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between them and the egg soufflé, swathed about with a snowy napkin, erupting little steam geysers from its golden-brown crust. The dining-room, like all the rooms at Mayberry, was big and square and high-ceilinged, and the four silver candlesticks illumined only the table and a little circle about it. Marietta, who was tall and angular and stern-faced, and who had the softest heart in the world, came and went with plates of hot biscuits and pats of snowy butter. Marietta had been Joyce's nurse and had brought her to Mayberry Plantation after her father's death six years before. Marietta was house-girl now, but she had never yielded her claim to Little Lady, and in her own mind she was still "Miss Joyce's mammy." Marietta was a Sea Island darkey and as black as the proverbial ace of spades.

"I reckon that's enough biscuits, Marietta," said Joyce presently. "Where is the diphtheria, Uncle? In town?"

"Yes, in a house over beyond the railroad; Wilson's the name; you likely don't know them, Joyce. Kind of no-account folks, and



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poor as all get-out. It's a boy about sixteen. He's been working over in Foster and lost his job last week and came home. It's a bad case, too, I reckon."

"I'm sorry. Is there anything we can do?"

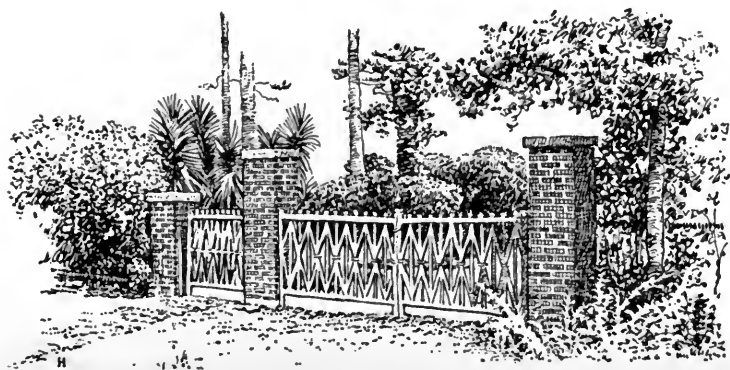
"N—no, I don't reckon. Not at present, anyhow. By the way, you said you were dull to-day, didn't you?"

"Yes, frightfully." Joyce sighed. "It was such a mean day, wasn't it?"

"I reckon life's kind of quiet for you here, Little Lady, after Athens. Reckon sometimes you wish you were back at the Academy, eh?"

"No, I don't, not for a moment. Nasty old lessons! I'm not usually bored, Uncle, only to-day—somehow——" Her voice trailed off and she nibbled absently at a biscuit, her eyes, wistful and slightly perplexed, gazing into the shadows across the room.

Joyce Mayberry was small and slender, but her slenderness was the slenderness of curves and not of angles. The slim waist, the young arms, the neck that rose above the



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simple blue gown, were round and carefully moulded. No title could have fitted her better than that which Marietta had given her when she was still barely out of arms. Little Lady, Marietta had called her, and Little Lady she had remained. For all her smallness she was patrician from head to feet, with a proud set to that same brown head and an inherent dignity that would have done duty for a woman ten inches taller. But all the dignity and pride in the world couldn't quell the animation and mischief and fun in Joyce, and to see her so soberly thoughtful caused the Old Doctor uneasiness. He looked across at the little oval face under its crown of soft hair, at the big dark-brown eyes, the straight nose and the red bow of her mouth, the corners of which at the moment drooped troubledly, and realized, with something of a shock, that here was no longer the Little Lady of a few years ago, or even of last year, but a Little Lady grown suddenly, almost overnight it seemed to him, into a woman, and a very lovely woman at that. The thing savored of miracles! He recalled the fact



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that he had spoken of her only that very morning as "a slip of a girl." She was not that any more. Her eyes, richly, deeply brown, and at first impression quite the biggest feature about her, returned from space and caught his gaze. The mouth lost its droop.

"A penny, Uncle!" she laughed.

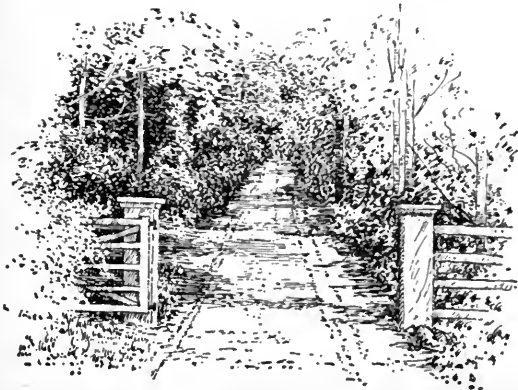
"My dear." The Old Doctor stirred his coffee, considering the rival merits of absolute truth and equivocation. In the end he decided for the latter. "I was thinking," he answered, "that I had perhaps given some one a wrong impression of you this morning, Joyce."

"Some one? Who, Uncle Cass?"

"That Mr. Weld at the Palmetto House. You see I called you 'a slip of a girl.'"

"Do you think that was nice?" she asked. "And how did you come to speak of me, sir?"

"H'm." The Old Doctor deliberated again. "I wonder if I told you that this Mr. Weld is one of the New York family of that name who are among the—er—very rich, Joyce."



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She shook her head.

"He's the son, an only son. I believe there's a daughter, too, however, in school. I spoke of inducing Mr. Weld to come out here to Mayberry, you remember."

"Of course! When is he coming? Is he nice? Does he put on airs like most of the wealthy folks I've met?"

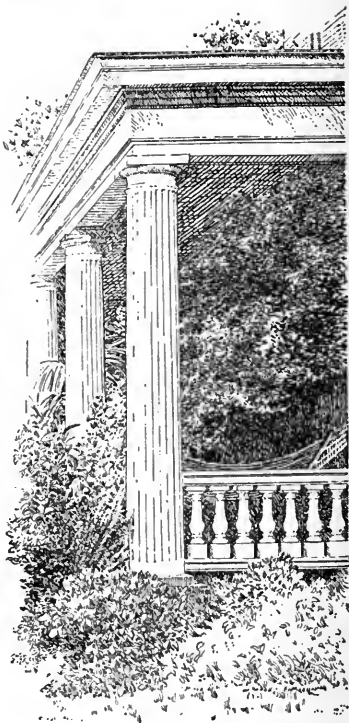
"N—no, I reckon not. Just now he's much too miserable to put on airs." He chuckled. "I reckon it's about all he can do to put on his clothes, Joyce. Well, as a matter of fact, he's coming to-morrow, but I had a good deal of trouble persuading him. Didn't want to come at first because I wouldn't let him pay."

"I'm afraid he's just like all the other rich people," commented Joyce with a shake of her head.

"Well, I coaxed him around that difficulty and then he found that there was a young lady here, and he balked again."

"He must be quite horrid! Why?"

"No, he's not horrid. He—he's what I call a fine fellow, Joyce, and you mustn't lay that against him. You see, he's down on



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his luck right now. I read about it in the papers a while back. He was engaged to a girl up North and she—er—changed her mind, I reckon. Anyway, the engagement was broken a little while before he came to Ridge. Reckon he feels pretty badly about it, Little Lady. Reckon he kind of hates the sight of women folks right now. He'll get over it in time, of course, but I suppose he's still kind of sick at heart. And that's why he didn't want to come out here when he found there was a young lady around."

"A slip of a girl," said Joyce plaintively.

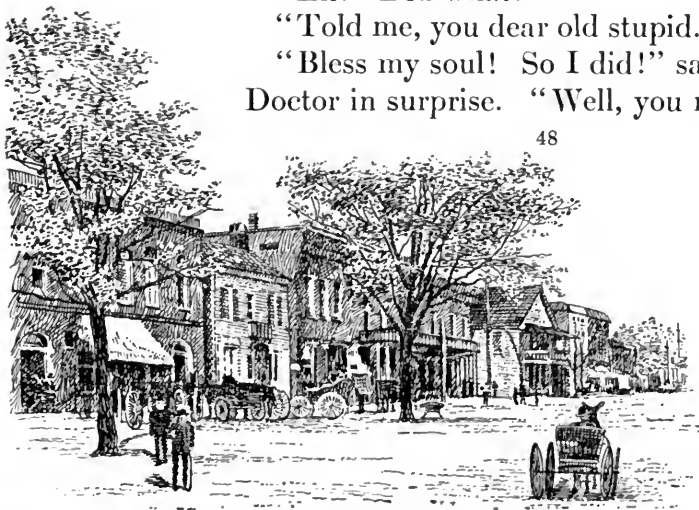
"Well, calling you that seemed to make a difference. I told him I'd explain things to you and you wouldn't bother him any, but he said no, not to do that; that he didn't want you to think him a fool."

"So you went ahead and did it," laughed Joyce.

"Eh? Did what?"

"Told me, you dear old stupid."

"Bless my soul! So I did!" said the Old Doctor in surprise. "Well, you needn't tell



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on me. Besides, I reckon you'd better know."

"What else did you say—about me?" asked Joyce.

"Why, nothing. Only that you would be pleased to have him here. He said something about making trouble for you, you see."

"That I'd be pleased to have him? I wonder just how you said that, Uncle Cass. What particular words did you use, sir?"

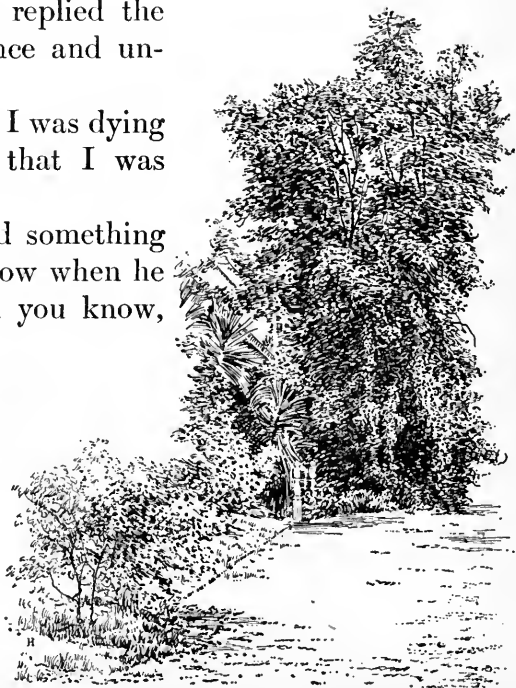
"Why—why—let me see. I think I said that you'd be mighty pleased to have him; that you were delighted when I spoke to you about his coming."

"Go on, Uncle Cass. You're doing splendidly," said Joyce sweetly.

"I—I reckon that was all," replied the Old Doctor, viewing her askance and uncomfortably.

"Truly? Didn't you tell him I was dying of impatience to see him and that I was counting the minutes?"

"N—no, but I reckon I said something about you being after me to know when he was coming. You *have* asked, you know,



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Joyce, and I wanted him to feel that he would be welcome."

"And what did he say, please?"

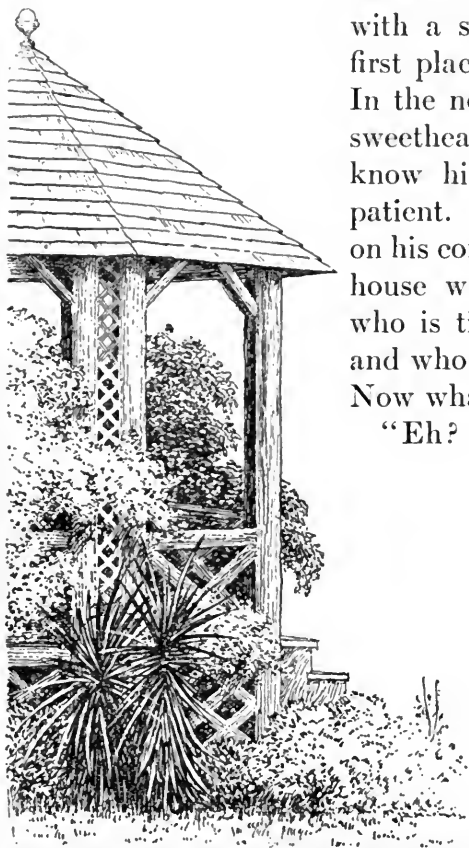
"He said—let me see—he said: 'That's very nice of her.'"

"I can just hear him say it!" exclaimed Joyce. "Uncle Cass, you—you—— Well, I can't tell you politely what I think of you, so I'll keep still." Joyce leaned her chin on one palm and with the other hand beat an impatient tattoo on the table with a spoon.

"Why—why—what——"

"Oh, I know you don't realize just what an absurd thing you have done," said Joyce with a sigh. "But listen, Uncle. In the first place this young man is very wealthy. In the next place he has been jilted by his sweetheart. In the next place you hardly know him except as a doctor knows his patient. Then you invite him—you *insist* on his coming to spend a week or two at your house where there is an unmarried niece who is tickled to death to have him come and who simply can't wait till he gets there. Now what do you think?"

"Eh? You mean—why—why, that's



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nonsense, my dear! The man is a gentleman! He'd never think of such a thing. It's—it's absolutely absurd, Joyce!"

"No, it isn't. You think a moment, Uncle Cass."

The Old Doctor obligingly thought, blinking and frowning at the nearest candle.

"Well?" asked Joyce.

"Perhaps you are right, my dear," was the answer. "But you must know that—that I hadn't the least thought of such a thing. And if he is the man I know him to be he—he won't think it, either."

"Men are just men," replied Joyce decidedly. "He may try not to think it, but he's bound to just the same. He'll think that you want him to come out here in the hope that if he is thrown into the society of 'the slip of a girl' for a week or two he will lose his silly heart to her and marry her. It would be bad enough if he were just—just any one, but when he has a mint of money it makes it all the worse. It looks as though you—both of us, I reckon—were after his money. You see what I mean?"

"Yes," answered the Old Doctor dis-



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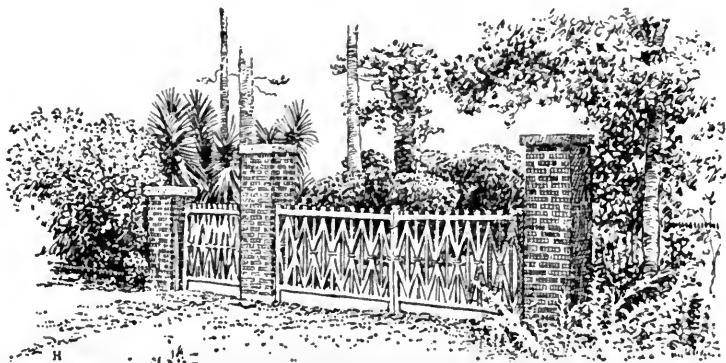
tressedly. "I see what you mean, Little Lady. Only—when a man has had a blow such as Mr. Weld has had, Joyce, why—seems to me he's immune, isn't he?"

"Men are never immune, Uncle Cass, and you know it as well as I do. And that makes it all the worse; just as though we had no—no respect for his sorrow. As though I was to—to make him forget and—and all that."

"I did think something of that sort, too," said the Old Doctor. "I hoped you'd—er—amuse him and—and take his mind off his troubles."

"Uncle Cass," said Joyce sternly, "I almost believe you are guilty after all!"

"No, no! That's all I thought, Joyce. You see," he added ruefully, "I—I'm sort of fond of the boy and I hated to think of his staying there at the hotel all alone with just his rheumatism and his thoughts for company. I thought maybe if he was here we could cheer him up, and he could be out of doors more. But I reckon I made a fool of myself, child. The—the awkward part of it is that I don't just know how to get out of it now, Joyce."



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Joyce frowned thoughtfully at the teaspoon.

"I suppose," he went on presently, "I might say that you had been called away somewhere on a visit—or something. That might do!"

"Do you mean," she asked without looking up, "that you want me to go away so you can tell him that?"

"Why, no, Little Lady, of course not; unless you want to visit somewhere."

"Then you intend to tell him a monstrous big fib, Uncle Cass, and I shan't help you. As for going away, there's no place to go to except Augusta, and you know the Darrells are very stupid."

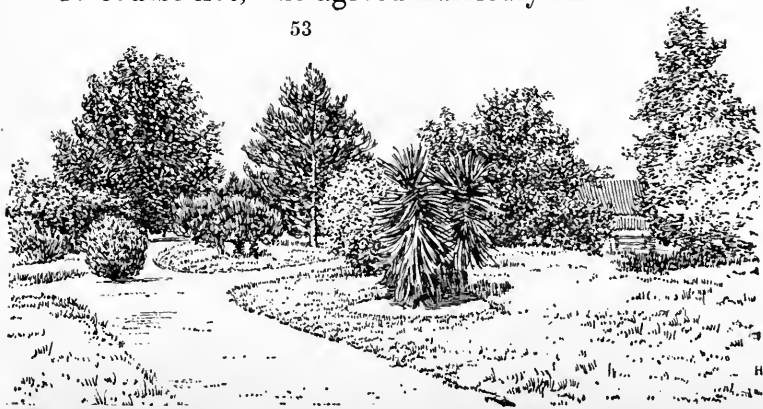
"And I reckon Tom's away, too," murmured the Old Doctor.

"Probably," replied Joyce with the slightest heightening of color. "Though he's not very interesting when he's at home."

"I thought," began the Old Doctor with a chuckle.

"You thought nothing of the sort," responded Joyce severely.

"Of course not," he agreed hurriedly and



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gravely. "But about Mr. Weld, now; what do you suggest?"

"It doesn't seem to me that it's my place to suggest anything," she replied cruelly. "It's your own scrape, Marse Doctor Mayberry." The Old Doctor sighed.

"Well, I reckon I'll just have to tell him the truth then."

"What?" asked Joyce uneasily.

"Why, that you don't want him here."

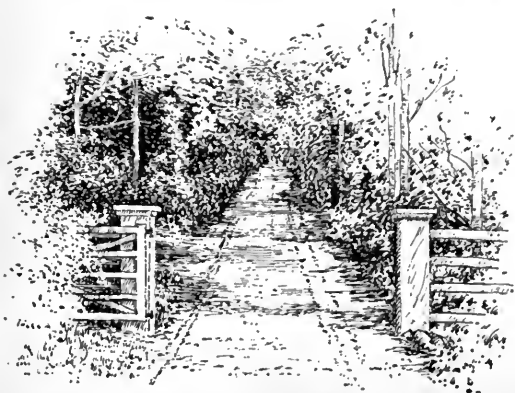
"That isn't the truth, Uncle Cass. I'd love to have him visit us. It would be quite heavenly to have a young man in the house. I wouldn't care how haughty or snobbish he were if—if only he didn't come with the idea that I was being thrown at his head."

"I've told you that I don't believe that idea would ever occur to him," said the Old Doctor mildly.

"I know you have, Uncle dear," returned his niece sweetly, "and I'm absolutely certain that the idea has already occurred to him. No, there's just one thing to do."

The Old Doctor brightened as he folded his napkin.

"Eh? Well, what is it?"



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"You must bring him out, just as you've arranged to. He can have the downstairs room and it will be easy for him to get in and out of doors. He can have the side porch all to himself."

"You mean that you will—er—keep away from him, Joyce? Wouldn't that seem sort of—er—inhospitable, as though you didn't welcome him?"

"But I have no intention of keeping away from him," replied Joyce gayly. "On the contrary, Uncle Cass, I shall spend all my spare moments amusing him, cheering him up, healing his broken heart."

"Why, but—but you just said——"

"That, Uncle dear, was before I'd thought of a way to get you out of your fearful scrape. Are you properly grateful to me?"

"Er—well, suppose you tell me about it first," he parried.

"It's quite simple. All great ideas are simple, aren't they? Now listen. To an unmarried, unattached female Mr. Weld's coming under the circumstances would be very embarrassing."

"Well?" asked the Old Doctor patiently.



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"But suppose, Uncle dear, that I am already spoken for."

"Spoken for? You mean—er——"

"Engaged, yes. That would make a difference, wouldn't it?"

"Why, yes, but—but you aren't!"

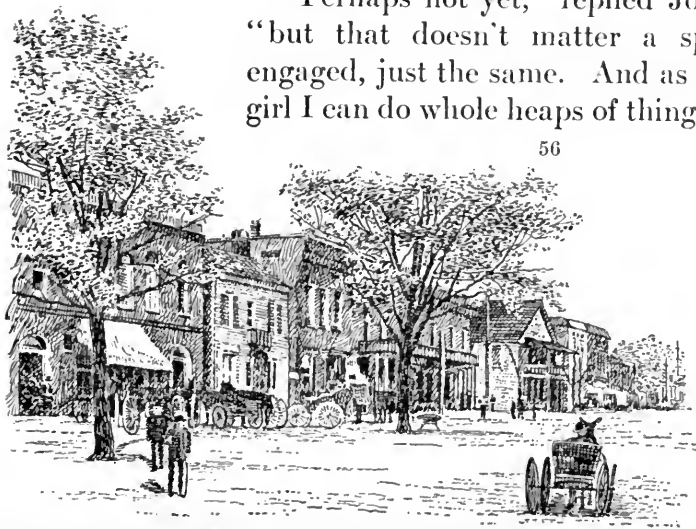
"Oh, but I am. I've been engaged for—" she turned and frowned at the dial of the old clock above the mantel—"for quite eight minutes." The Old Doctor stared, smiled uncertainly, and shook his head.

"Who's fibbing now, Joyce?" he asked.

"No one. Cousin Tom has asked me to marry him regularly every time I've seen him for the past two years and the offer still holds good; he has assured me of that many, many times. Well, eight—no, nine minutes ago, I accepted him—by wireless." She smiled triumphantly across the table.

"Hm!" said the Old Doctor. "Reckon Tom got your message?"

"Perhaps not yet," replied Joyce lightly, "but that doesn't matter a speck. I'm engaged, just the same. And as an engaged girl I can do whole heaps of things I couldn't



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have done ten minutes ago. It's wonderful what a difference being engaged makes, Uncle. Why, I feel different already!"

"I don't know as I altogether like it," protested the Old Doctor with a shake of his head. "Somehow, it don't seem just fair to Tom, Little Lady. Seems to me he ought to know about it."

"So he shall—when he gets home. You see, I don't know where he is. He asked me to let him write to me, but I wouldn't. I reckon it would have been better if I had."

"I reckon it wouldn't be hard to find out his address."

"N—no, but after all there's no hurry about telling him, Uncle. Just as long as I know I'm engaged, you see!"

"And you really mean to—to marry him?"

"Why, of course! At least—I did a few minutes ago. Anyhow, Uncle Cass, it makes it all right about Mr. Weld, doesn't it?"

"Maybe it does and maybe it doesn't," replied her uncle cautiously. "Doesn't sound quite fair and square to me, Joyce."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

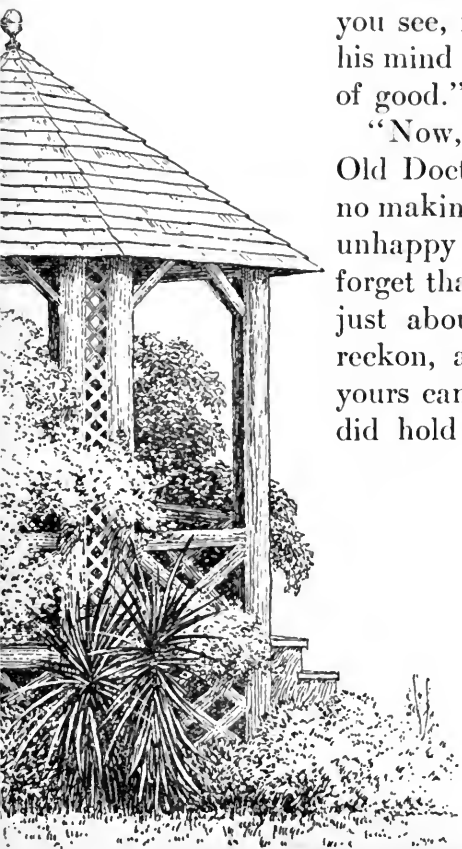
Suppose—suppose he *did*—er—fall in love with you?”

“But he won’t, you see, because I’m already engaged.”

“Hm!” grunted the Old Doctor doubtfully. “Reckon, then, I’d better tell him the first thing in the morning. Seems like I heard somebody say a little while ago that a man was never immune. Reckon we’d better not take any risks, Joyce.”

“No, I prefer to tell him myself; unless, that is, he actually *asks* you, Uncle Cass. But he won’t, of course. And even if he did—did sort of like me a little, why, don’t you see, it’s just what he needs? It’ll take his mind off the other girl and do him heaps of good.”

“Now, look here, young lady,” said the Old Doctor warningly, “no monkey-tricks, no making eyes at him and having him more unhappy than he is! You don’t want to forget that you’re a mighty pretty little girl, just about the prettiest in the county, I reckon, and that those big brown eyes of yours can make a heap of trouble. I never did hold with this homeopathic notion of



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curing like with like, you know, and it isn't just my idea to heal a broken heart by breaking it in a new place!"

Joyce laughed merrily.

"Shucks, Uncle Cass, if I break Mr. Weld's heart again I'll heal it myself!"

"Hm. And how about Tom Darrell?"

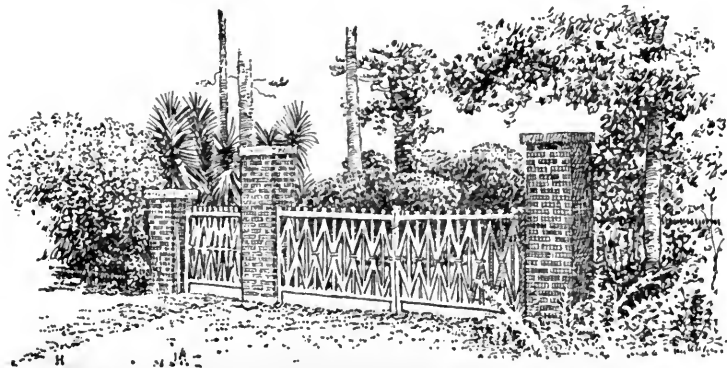
Joyce sighed.

"I reckon I'd most forgot about Tom," she said.



V.

AND so Philip took his rheumatism and his broken heart, his trunk and his kit-bag, to Mayberry, riding out there over the yellow clay road propped up with pillows in the back seat of an antiquated hack, with Doctor Mayberry beside him. The weather had relented and the sun shone subduedly through an amber haze. The road lay along one side of the golf-links and Philip gave a sigh for his idle clubs reposing in their locker. But the sigh was a short one, for he was quite excited by this new adventure, and his relief at leaving the hotel bedroom behind was great enough to make up for many past disappointments. The carriage swung along slowly and the Old Doctor pointed out the places along the way. When the last house in the town had been passed he bade the driver draw rein beside the road and then called Philip's attention to the panorama of sloping field and wood that fell westward to the floor of the valley.



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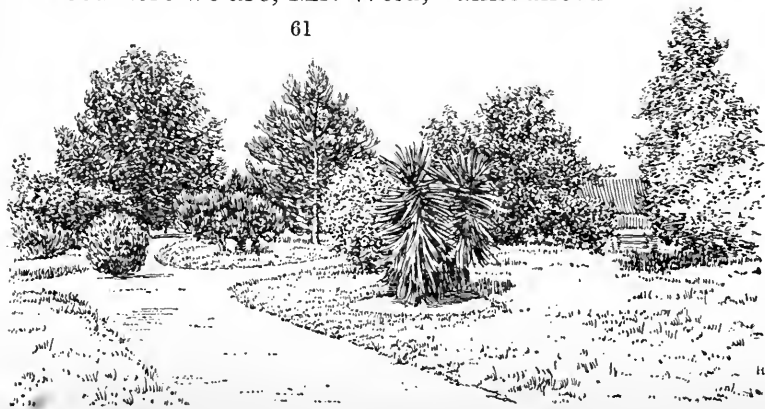
"That was pretty near all Mayberry at one time," explained the Old Doctor. "Twenty-seven hundred acres there was of it in my grandfather's time, sir, and as fine land as you'll find in the South. That farthest hill over yonder's in Georgia; the line runs just this side. Go ahead, Mose."

The road followed the narrow plateau from which the town gets its name, the valley narrowing and broadening below them. Then pine woods closed in on either side, and, since the spring had been late, festoons of yellow jasmine blossoms still graced the paths and clearings and the sweet odor mingled with the fragrance of the pines. Philip drew long breaths and smiled at the Old Doctor.

"That's fine," he said. "I feel better already, Doctor."

Presently they were out of the woods again and bare brown cotton-fields flanked the road. And then the carriage turned in at the foot of the lane and rolled along under the shade of the oaks which stood, sentinel-like, on either side.

"And here we are, Mr. Weld," announced



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the Old Doctor. "Welcome to Mayberry, sir. Give a hand here, Ajax, and help Mr. Weld out. Carefully now, please. That's it. We'll go right around the side porch to your room, sir. Mose, you get that luggage off. Where's Miss Joyce, Marietta?"

"She done go for a ride, sir, and ain't come back yet. But the gentleman's room's all ready for him."

Philip felt rather shaky after the journey and his recollection of the arrival at Mayberry was always very dim and confused. After a while he was aware that he was stretched luxuriously on a big white bed with a many-colored knitted quilt over him and that the Old Doctor was holding a glass of something to his lips and that Marietta was unpacking his bag. Later there was a little dinner that tasted wonderfully good, and then, for the rest of the day, he slept and drowsed and was very comfortable and contented. At last he found himself thoroughly awake and the room was in twilight and from where he lay he could look through a broad window out into a green world over which the sinking sun was pouring a wash



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of gold. He wondered about the time; wondered in what part of this new domain of his they had placed his watch; wondered if he could see it if he turned over; wondered what difference it made, anyway. And while he was still wondering, lazily and peacefully, there was a knock at the hall door and Ajax entered.

"How you feelin' now, sir?" he asked sympathetically. "Hope you done rested nicely, sir?"

"Finely. What's your name?"

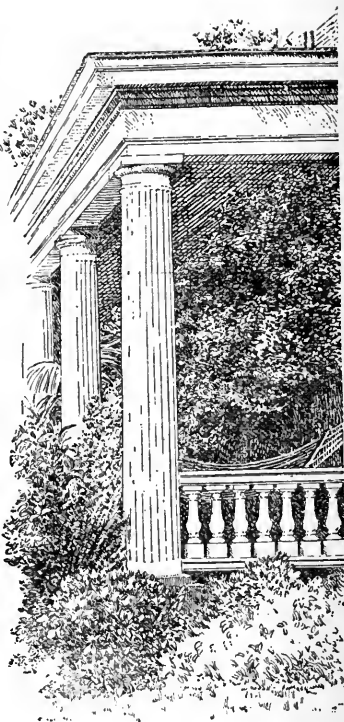
"Ajax, sir. Reckon I better make a light fo' you. Marietta's goin' bring you yo' supper in a minute."

"Is it supper-time?" asked Philip in surprise. "Why, here, I'll get up for supper. I'm all right."

"Don't reckon I would, Mister Weld, sir," remonstrated Ajax gently, with a shake of his head. "Marse Doctor he gone away an' Miss Joyce she say you goin' have yo' supper on a tray, sir."

"Oh! The Doctor's had a call?"

"Yes, sir, some nigger over to Marse Hooper's place done got kicked with a mule."



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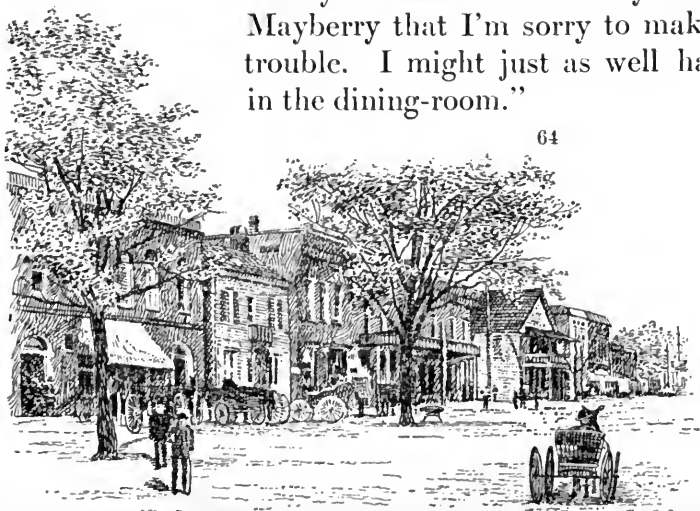
"That sounds interesting," murmured Philip, watching Ajax perform the ceremony of lighting the three lamps which supplied illumination for the big room. "Hurt badly, was he?"

"No, sir, I reckon not. They said he was kicked in the head." Ajax chuckled softly. "Reckon Marse Doctor 'll find it's the mule what needs his 'tention. Anything I can do for you, Mister Weld, sir?"

"No, I guess not. Wait, though. You might give me a lift. I think I'll have my supper in that chair."

"Yes, sir, surely. You wait till I fetch it over there, sir. There you are, Mister Weld. Now you jus' put yo' arm 'roun' my neck, sir, an' I'll lift you up. You got the misery, ain' you, sir? It's a terrible bad thing to have: it is that!"

"Oh, I'm getting all right now," responded Philip. "Only when I've been keeping still a while my knees get sort of creaky. Thanks. I wish you'd tell Miss Mayberry that I'm sorry to make so much trouble. I might just as well have supper in the dining-room."



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"Yes, sir, but it's Doctor's orders, sir. Reckon we all have to do like the doctors done tell us, Mister Weld."

"I suppose so. Have you been with the Doctor long, Ajax?"

"Lordy, sir, I ain' never been nowhere else! Marse Doctor he done raise me, he did. My mammy she use to belong to the Old, Old Doctor, Mister Weld, long befo' the War. Why, my name's jus' the same like Marse Doctor's; Ajax Mayberry, sir."

"Really? Well, that's a good name."

"Bes' name in the state o' South Ca'lina, sir."

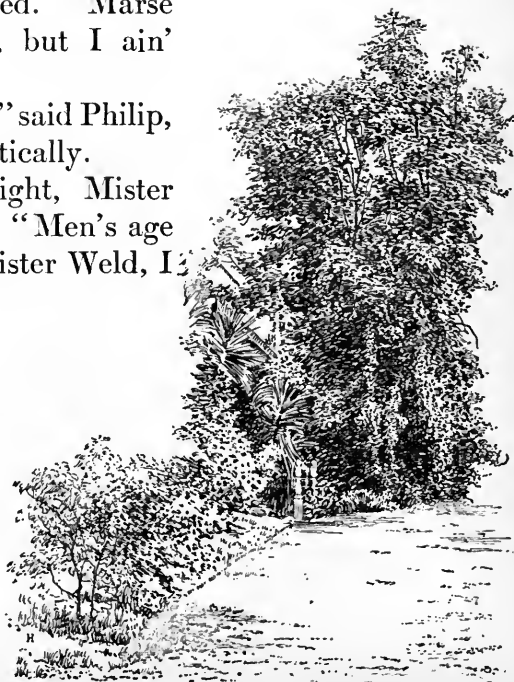
"How old are you, Ajax?"

Ajax scratched his head and grinned.

"I don' rightly know fo' sure, sir. Miss Joyce she tell me she reckon I'm 'bout ten years ol' sometimes," he chuckled. "Marse Doctor knows how ol' I am, but I ain' never ask him."

"Probably about twenty-five," said Philip, looking the young giant over critically.

"Yes, sir, I reckon yo' right, Mister Weld," agreed Ajax cheerfully. "Men's age don' make much diff'rence, Mister Weld, I



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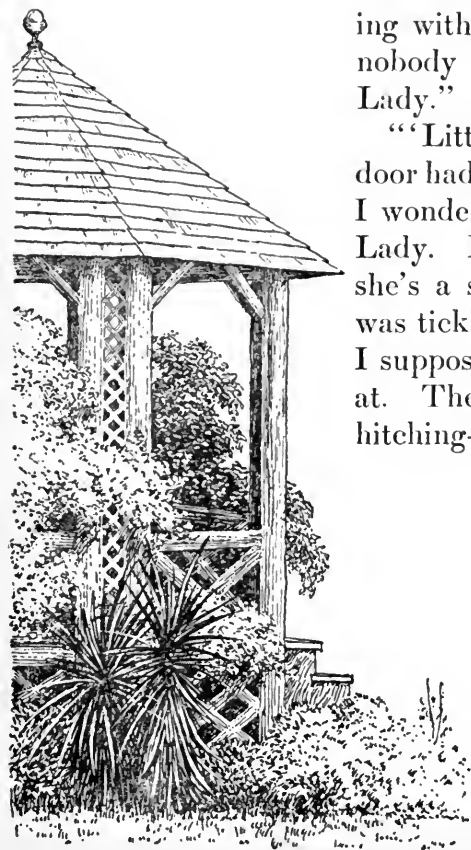
reckon. It's jus' the women what worry 'bout their age."

Later came Marietta with a well-filled tray and Philip did full justice to the repast. After that he lighted a pipe and found, or imagined, that tobacco tasted quite like tobacco again. When Marietta, returning for the tray, left the hall door open he heard sounds of a piano being played softly somewhere, evidently beyond a closed door.

"Is that Miss Mayberry playing, Marietta?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir." Marietta paused with tray in hand and listened, her stern face softening with pride and affection. "There ain' nobody can play on the piano like Little Lady."

"'Little Lady'" mused Philip when the door had closed again. "That's a cute name. I wonder when I'm going to see this Little Lady. I wonder what she's like. I'll bet she's a spoiled kid. The Doctor said she was tickled to death to have me come here. I suppose she wants some one to make eyes at. These Southern girls will flirt with a hitching-post, confound 'em! And the

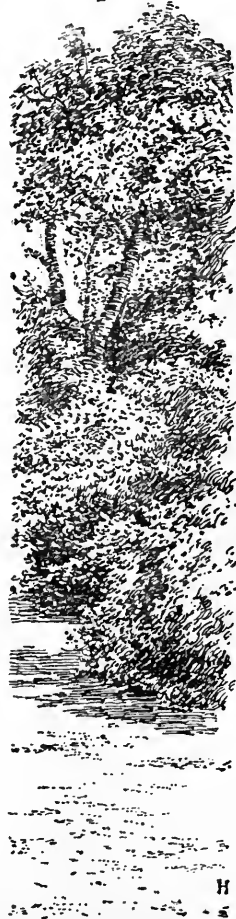


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deuce of it is that the hitching-post usually loses his head! Well, I guess she'll find me pretty dull, poor child. Perhaps, though, the Doctor has told her. He probably has. He's a dear old chap, but I'll wager he could no more keep a secret than he could fly. So, maybe after all, Miss Mayberry won't expect much in the way of devotion. I hope not. It's mighty nice of the Doctor to have me out here, but I'd hate to think I was expected to pay my way by making love to the niece." He tapped the ashes from his pipe. "My word, I'm actually getting sleepy again!" He yawned and raised himself gingerly from his chair. "My knees are certainly a whole lot better," he thought.

There was no clock in sight and so he walked over to a chair and found his watch in the pocket of his vest.

"Only eight," he marvelled. He yawned again, stretched his arms and looked longingly at the bed. "Guess I'll turn in. This is the sleepest place I ever struck. I wonder what it's like outdoors." He made his way to one of the big windows and looked out. A purple-blue sky with millions of stars and



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a little crescent moon sinking westward; warm, soft air fragrant with sleeping blossoms; a stillness that was almost tangible until, from around the corner of the house by way of the open windows, came the faint strains of the piano. He listened a moment, striving to make out the tune. Then, giving it up, he turned back toward the bed with another yawn.

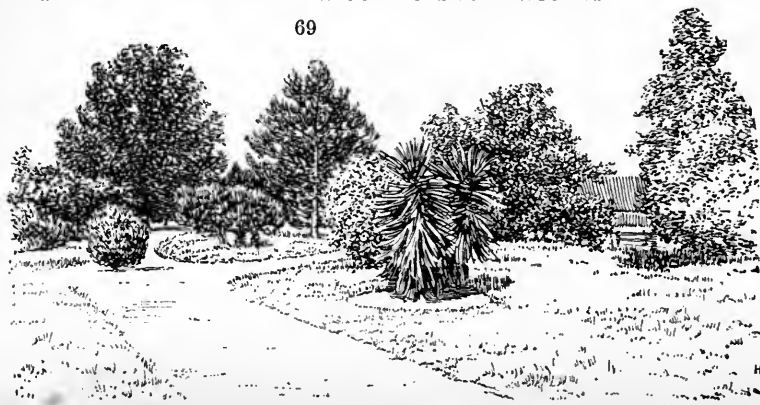
“Wonder if she’s pretty,” he murmured.



VI.

HE awoke the next morning to a world of sunlight and warmth. Outside his window, hidden in the branches of a big magnolia tree, a mocking-bird was singing his heart out, while, beyond the garden fence, a turkey-gobbler was scraping his wings and trying his best to drown the songster's efforts with his strident "Gobble—gobble—obble—obble—obble!" But the mocking-bird was not to be outdone, and the merry war continued until silence from the yard suggested that the turkey had discovered something to eat.

Ajax appeared and aided Philip with his toilet, and then came Marietta with the breakfast-tray, followed by the Old Doctor, earnestly apologetic for his overnight neglect of the guest. An hour or so later, fully dressed once more, Philip walked, with the aid of a cane, quite spryly out onto the porch, Ajax and Marietta in anxious attendance, and was established in a comfortable wicker



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chair with pillows for his back and a stool for his feet and a little table beside him for his medicine and books and pipe and tobacco. The porch was on the morning side of the house and the sunlight bathed it warmly, save where a honeysuckle, already showing pink buds, clambered to the roof and flecked the boards with a quivering tracery of shadow.

"I suppose the Doctor has gone, Ajax?" asked Philip.

"Yes, sir."

"And Miss Mayberry? She's at home?"

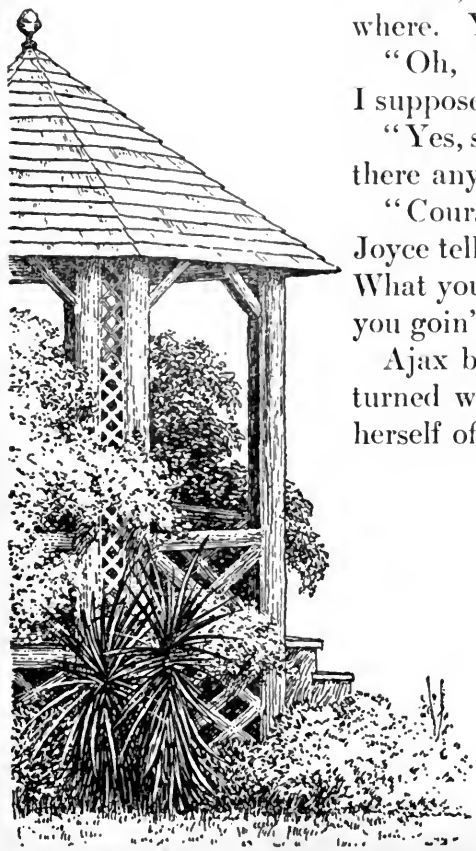
"Yes, sir, Miss Joyce she aroun' somewhere. You want to see her, sir?"

"Oh, no, I—just wondered, that's all. I suppose you get the mail here?"

"Yes, sir, mornin' mail's done come. Was there anything for Mister Weld, Ma'ietta?"

"Course they was, Ajax! I hear Miss Joyce tell you take 'em to him long time ago. What you mean, I like to know? Some day you goin' forget yo' name!"

Ajax beat a hurried retreat and soon returned with the mail. Marietta had taken herself off and Ajax heaved a sigh.



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"That woman gettin' terrible high an' mighty these days, Mister Weld. Anything I can do for you, sir?"

"Not a thing, Ajax. Much obliged."

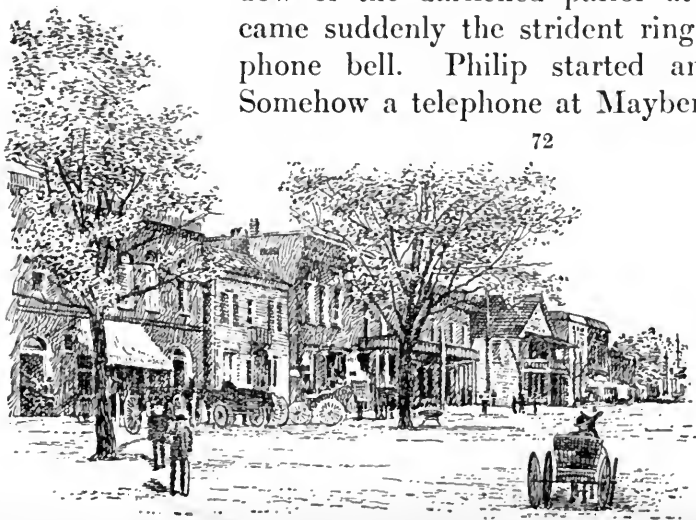
Philip went through his letters, none of which were either important or interesting, and tossed them on the table. He took up a book he had brought with him, but after finding his place he turned it face down on his knees and let his gaze wander. Beyond the edge of the porch lay the garden, a rectangle whose brick-edged paths converged about a summer-house almost hidden by white and purple wistaria. The garden was somewhat overgrown, but there was beauty in its very riot and tangle. Beyond it, marked by a row of oleanders, ran a fence dividing it from the lane which led back to the quarters. At the rear two great glossy-leaved magnolias made a wealth of shade, while at the far angle of the fence stood an ancient chinaberry tree, shaped like a great green toadstool. The tangle held many rose-bushes; in some places they had grown into veritable thickets, the long branches sprawling above the paths. There



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were climbers, too, along the fence, with tiny foliage that glistened in the sunlight as though newly varnished. Few blooms were in sight as yet, though here and there a daring blossom flaunted itself and many buds showed color. The garden held old-fashioned things; smoke-shrub, pomegranate, yucca, deutzia, sweet-shrub, Japan quince, flowering almond, dwarf orange, crêpe myrtle, white jasmine; while near at hand a colony of violets bordered a path and filled the morning air with fragrance, and a clump of banana trees were uncurling their long glistening leaves. Beyond the lane a cotton-field lay ready for the drill, a quarter-mile expanse of warm clay-loam, sloping slightly to the fringe of trees whose tender shades of new green were interspersed with the deep pink of the red-bud in full bloom. Over all hung a warm blue sky that held a few streaky white clouds along its edge.

From the house, through the opened window of the darkened parlor at his back, came suddenly the strident ring of a telephone bell. Philip started and smiled. Somehow a telephone at Mayberry seemed

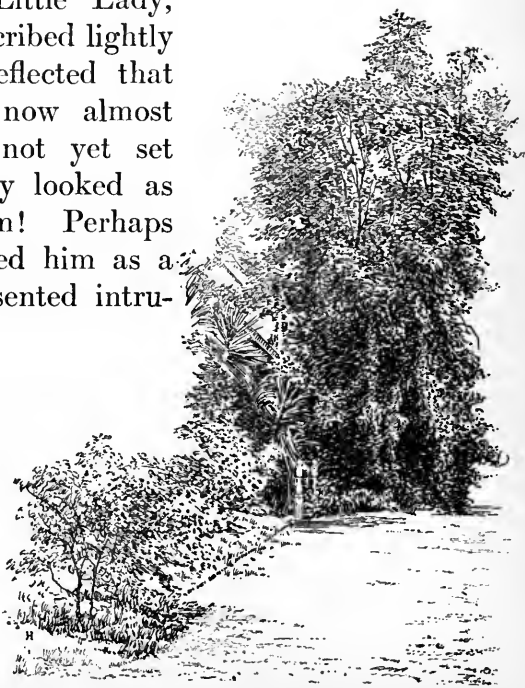


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very incongruous. Then he heard a voice speaking, and listened intently.

"Hello! . . . No, sir, Doctor Mayberry is not here . . . He has gone to town. . . . I reckon you can reach him if you call up Jordan's Drug Store. . . . Is there any message? . . . Very well. Good-bye."

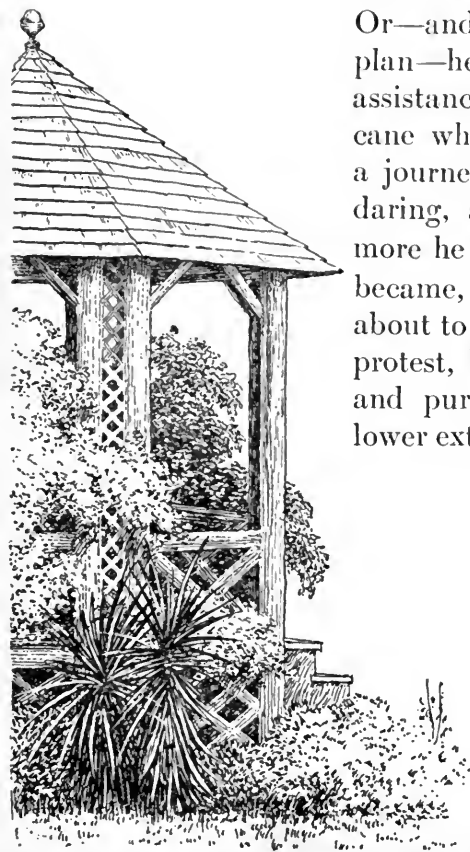
That was Little Lady, thought Philip. She had a wonderfully attractive voice, sort of—sort of ripply and—and sunny, with queer little throaty tones here and there. And he smiled over her pronunciation of her own name, she paid so little attention to the r's; "Maybaih," it sounded like. He was distinctly sorry when he heard the receiver go back to its hook, and fell to speculating idly as to what she might be like, this Miss Joyce Maybaih, this Little Lady, whom the Old Doctor had described lightly as "a slip of a girl." He reflected that he had been a guest here now almost twenty-four hours and had not yet set eyes on his hostess. It really looked as though she were avoiding him! Perhaps the Old Doctor had described him as a cantankerous patient who resented intru-



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sion on his privacy and the young lady was afraid to beard him.

Still, it was undeniably her duty to see him. It might be that, in spite of the Old Doctor's asseverations, she didn't want him there any more than he had at first wanted to come! Or, again, perhaps she was, after all, just a somewhat gawky, giggly, shy school-girl. Only—well, it would be satisfactory to have the problem solved! He might summon one of the servants and demand audience of his hostess. He might even brazenly shout her name! He might, but he was very sure he wasn't going to! Or—and this was a much more interesting plan—he might get on his feet and, with the assistance of the Old Doctor's gold-headed cane which stood at his side, set forth on a journey of discovery. That would be a daring, adventurous thing to do, and the more he thought of it the more attractive it became, until, finally, looking cautiously about to make sure that there was no one to protest, he laid aside the yellow and black and purple knitted thing with which his lower extremities had been enveloped, raised



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himself slowly to his feet and, cane in hand, stepped resolutely forth along the porch.

He was surprised and delighted to find that the rheumatism troubled him very little. Why, there was no reason why he shouldn't wander about to his heart's, or, rather, his curiosity's content; as long, that is, as there were no steps to mount. At the corner of the house he leaned on his cane and peered around. The front porch was empty. There were some chairs there and a hammock at the farther end behind a screen of vines. In front of him was the end of the driveway, with its moss-stained mounting-block. Across the drive lay a sandy space shaded by oaks and mulberry-trees and fringed with Spanish bayonet, whereon croquet wickets leaned tipsily about. English ivy draped thickly the trunk of one big oak and around the base of it was a sagging seat on which lay two mallets and a ball.

"Well, I needn't go without sport, after all," reflected Philip with a grin.

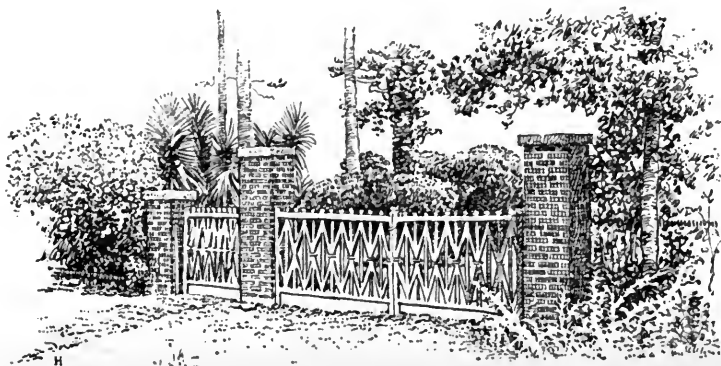
He went on to the front door. Beyond lay a wide hall, cool and dim in contrast to the sunlight outside. Half-way back a flight of



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stairs mounted leisurely to a landing, turned and disappeared. Near by was a console topped by a heavy gilt mirror. In the geometrical centre of it reposed a silver salver holding—what the dickens was it? He advanced quietly through the portal, feeling like a burglar, and drew near. The object in the dish was a slice of bread, buttered and sprinkled with brown sugar!

"I guess the school-girl theory is the right one," Philip reflected. "She had just bitten that corner off when the telephone bell rang, I'll bet." He looked around and there a little further along was the telephone, supporting his theory. "I wonder where she is now." He listened but heard nothing. The big house was as silent as a tomb. There were five doors in sight. "Let me see," he muttered. "That's the parlor and my room is there back of it. Across the way is the dining-room and that door at the end leads to the servants' quarters and kitchen, I suppose. And here"—he pushed wider open a door slightly ajar and peeped in—"is the library. By Jove, he's got a lot of books!"

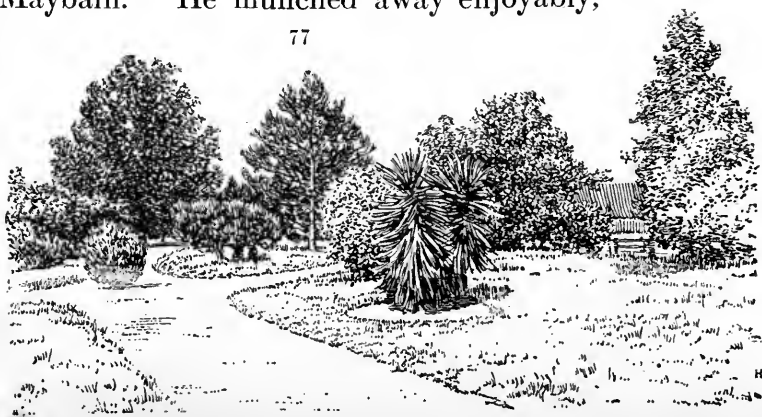


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A leather couch stood invitingly near and Philip suddenly realized that his legs were demanding rest. On the point of lowering himself to the couch, however, the recollection of that slice of bread and butter and brown sugar came to him temptingly. It certainly had looked very good, and he was really hungry. He didn't know when he had eaten his last slice of sugared bread; perhaps twenty years ago. It was high time to have another! He looked out. The fascinating dainty was still there and nothing was to be heard.

"All quiet along the Potomac," he murmured as he slipped into the hall. "Now for the desperate deed." He seized the silver salver and retreated as quickly as he could to the library, chuckling like a school-boy. Seating himself on the couch, he placed the cane beside him, sighed and introduced a corner of the slice between two sets of very white and capable teeth.

"Um—m," he murmured ecstatically. "It doesn't taste quite as I remember it, but it's mighty good. I hope there's more for Miss Maybair." He munched away enjoyably,



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the silver dish held in his lap to catch the crumbs, a bit of thoughtfulness very commendable in a bachelor. In the act of stowing the last morsel away he stopped and listened. There were footsteps on the stairway and a voice was humming a song. He was about to be discovered! Well—! He hurriedly consumed the last piece just as the footsteps and the humming ended abruptly outside in the hall. Philip smiled as he pictured the look of bewilderment on her face. There was a moment of silence. Then,

“Chile, you sure is crazy!” quoth the girl. Philip’s smile deepened. Another moment of silence. Then,

“Well,” she said resignedly, “it’s gone. And the card-dish, too.” He heard her go to the front door, even caught a brief glimpse of white as she passed the library. He wondered if it wasn’t time for him to make his appearance. But even while debating it he heard her coming back. She was still talking aloud to herself.

“I reckon it’s hants,” she murmured.

The library door began to swing inward.



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Philip watched it in fascinated suspense. A fleck of white came into sight at the bottom; then four slim fingers higher up; and then—then two big startled brown eyes were looking down at him and a pair of red lips grew round with surprise and dismay.

"*Oh!*" whispered Joyce.



VII.

“How do you do?”

Philip arose as gracefully as he might and smiled reassuringly. But the figure in the doorway retreated a step, swinging the door with her, until just a white slice of her face containing one round brown eye remained in sight.

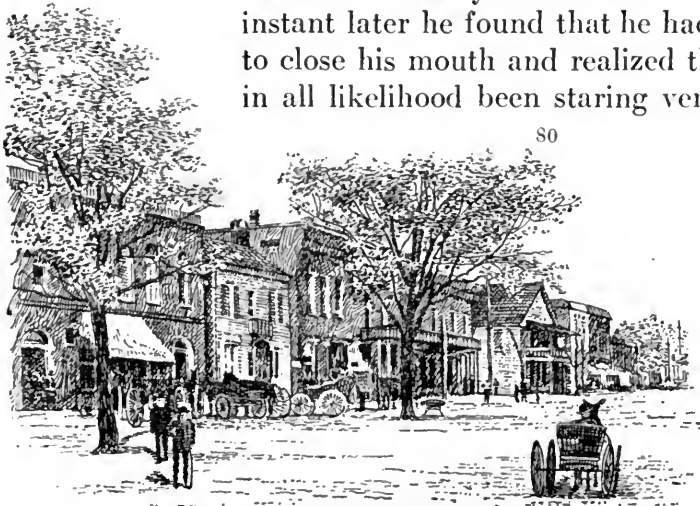
“Who—are you?” asked Joyce weakly.

“I reckon I’m the hant, Miss Mayberry,” laughed Philip.

The door opened a little wider and the girl looked across at him in dawning comprehension.

“You—you’re Mr. Weld!” she exclaimed.

“I am! And you’re Miss Maybair—that is, Mayberry. I’m very sorry I frightened you. You see—I——” But Philip at last had an unimpeded view of her and the words died away behind his tongue. An instant later he found that he had forgotten to close his mouth and realized that he had in all likelihood been staring very rudely.



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"It—was kind of creepy," the girl was saying with a little half-breathless laugh at herself. "But it doesn't matter. I—I reckon we ought to shake hands, Mr. Weld."

"Indeed we ought," he replied with enthusiasm, stepping forward.

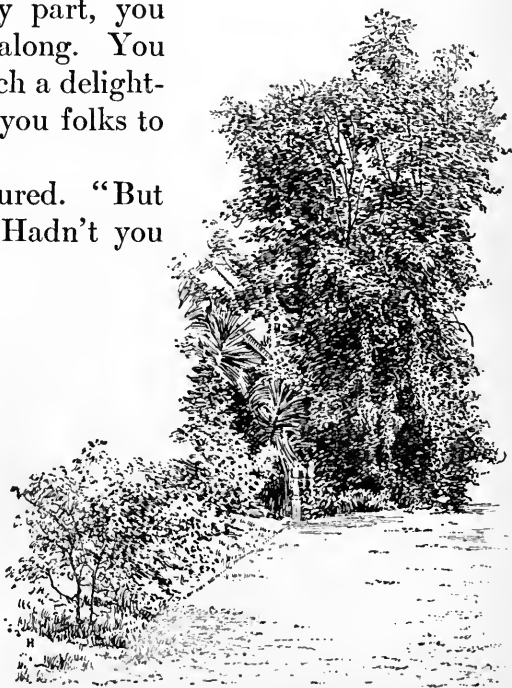
The ceremony was performed. A tiny, warm hand clasped Philip's for an instant and a pair of very remarkable brown eyes smiled up at him. A soft Southern voice said:

"We're so pleased to have you at Maybaih, Mr. Weld. I hope you'll like it and get well very, very soon."

"Thank you, Miss Mayberry." Philip slipped his hand in a pocket, unconsciously seeking to retain thereon the impression left by the slim fingers. "For my part, you know, I hope I'll sort of linger along. You see, I'm in no hurry to leave such a delightful place. It's awfully kind of you folks to have me out here."

"I don't think so," she murmured. "But ought you to stand so long? Hadn't you better sit down?"

"If you will," smiled Philip.



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"I mustn't yet, Mr. Weld. I'm not through my duties. I was——" Her glance fell on the silver dish which Philip had set on the floor beside the couch and a little pucker of astonishment wrinkled her forehead.

"Yes?" asked Philip, gravely polite.

"I was—looking for something," she said. She shot a glance at his face and pointed to the dish. "How did that get here?" she demanded.

"That? Oh, you mean the dish. Why, I put it there," he replied innocently.

"Then—then what did you do with my bread and sugar?" she asked severely.

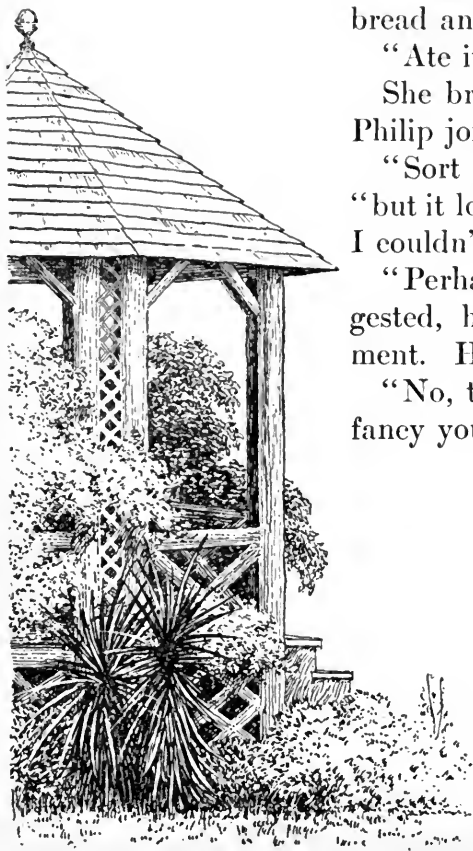
"Ate it," he answered brazenly.

She broke into a ripple of laughter, and Philip joined her.

"Sort of mean, I know," he apologized, "but it looked so good, Miss Mayberry, that I couldn't resist. It *was* good, too."

"Perhaps you'd like some more," she suggested, her eyes still dancing with merriment. He shook his head.

"No, thanks; at least, not at present. I fancy you would, though."



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"Naturally, as I only had a weeny little bite," she laughed. "I shall go and get it now. I'm glad you enjoyed it, Mr. Weld."

"That's generous of you. You ought to scold me for stealing, Miss Mayberry."

"Oh, I reckon you didn't know you were stealing. You just thought the console was a lunch-counter, didn't you, and helped yourself?"

"I certainly helped myself," he replied with a grin. He started to pick up the salver, but she darted past him.

"Please!" she exclaimed. "You mustn't do that, Mr. Weld. And I do think you ought to go back to the porch where it's warmer."

"Will you come too?" he asked boldly. "You see, it's a bit lonesome out there, Miss Mayberry."

"Why, yes," she answered simply, "just as soon as I get through with Marietta upstairs, Mr. Weld." She clasped the salver to the front of her white dress and smiled without a trace of coquetry. "I'm sorry you've been lonesome. If you were looking for a book——"



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"No, I was looking—looking around. I have a perfectly good book out there now, but I didn't feel like reading." He held the door open for her. "I hope Marietta won't keep you very long, Miss Mayberry. I shall insist on my rights as a guest, you see, and they include a fair share of my hostess's society."

"I'm afraid you'll find me a funny sort of hostess, Mr. Weld," she laughed as she went out. "We don't have many guests at Mayberry and so I've had little practice."

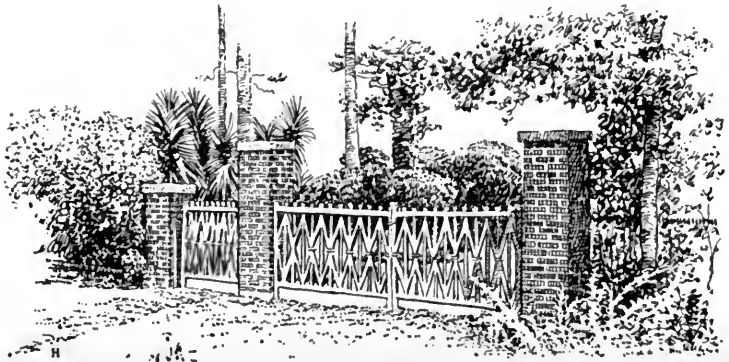
"Please practise on me."

"Shall I? And will you tell me just what a hostess should do and how she ought to behave?"

"Indeed I will! We'll establish a Training-school for Hostesses, Miss Mayberry. However, I know you're laughing at me, for I'm certain you're a most accomplished hostess, as accomplished as charming."

"Gracious! And what does a hostess do when a guest pays her compliments, Mr. Weld?"

"She—hm—well, she forgives him for stealing her lunch, for one thing."



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"And then?"

"Oh, then she—sort of gives him credit and balances the account by being very nice to him."

"Oh! Well——" She placed the salver back on the polished top of the console. "I'll try, Mr. Weld. Would it square us if I came down presently and sat on the porch with you for a while?"

"Rather! It would leave me terribly in debt."

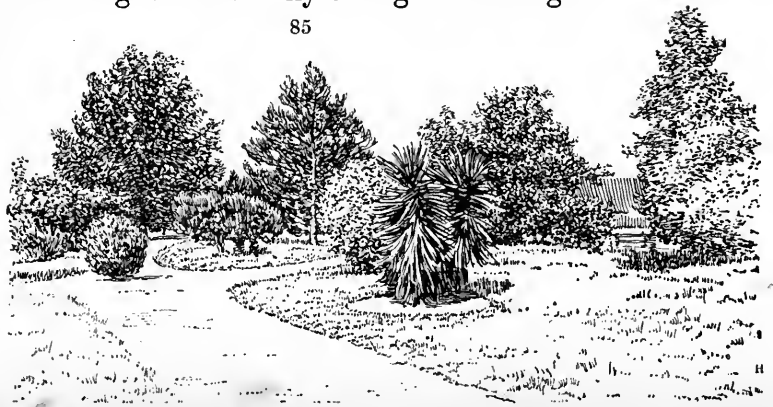
"And," she asked, one slim foot on the first step of the staircase, "what, Mr. Weld, does a guest do in such a case?"

"Why, then," replied Philip, "he is terribly nice to his hostess."

Joyce laughed merrily.

"How awfully polite we are going to be to each other, Mr. Weld!"

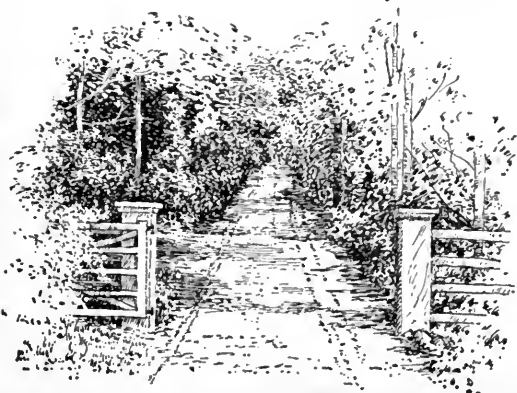
Philip went back to his chair on the side porch and lowered himself into it with a sigh of relief. His journey of discovery had been wonderfully successful, but he had returned from it pretty weak and shaky. It was good to rest his limbs again and feel the sunlight. Naturally enough his thoughts



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were busy with Miss Mayberry. He wondered how long it would be before she joined him. She seemed like an awfully nice, jolly girl, he reflected. Pretty, too; more than pretty; absolutely lovely; dainty and trim and—and—what was the word he wanted? Winsome! That was it.

“I never saw such eyes before,” he thought. “They’re a sort of chocolate—no, they’re a redder brown than chocolate. They’re the brownest sort of brown and there’s a kind of golden glint in them at times. And they’re so big, too. I suppose she’s an arrant coquette. Any Southern girl would be who looked like that. Still, she isn’t silly; rather level-headed and sensible, I fancy. How old did the Doctor say she was? Nineteen. Hm; most girls hereabouts get married by that time. Wonder if she’s engaged. I must look at her finger.” Then he sighed and frowned. “What difference does it make to you, you idiot? I thought you’d had enough of women for a while. Now don’t go and fall in love with this girl just because you’ve nothing to do. If you have any sneaking idea of that sort

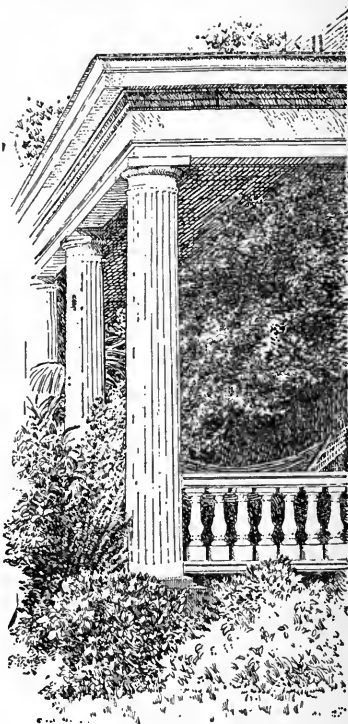


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you'd better pack up again and get right out. You ought to know when you're well off, seems to me."

He took up his book resolutely, but after a page had been turned he found himself staring into the garden.

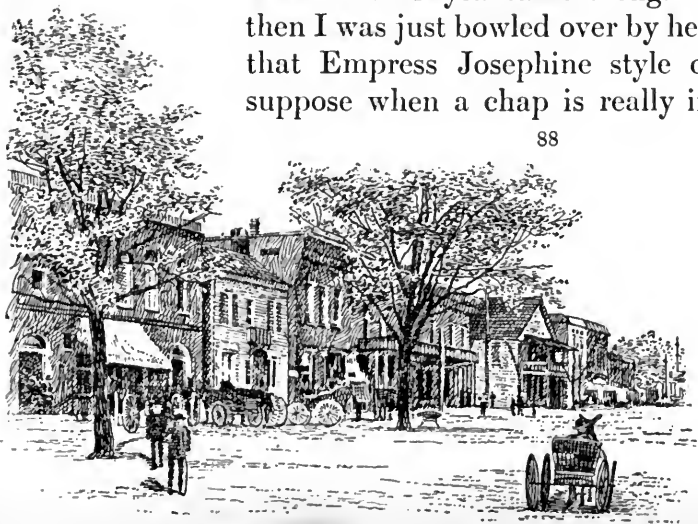
"She has a sense of humor, too. That's something Myra sadly lacked. Most women do. If Myra had had one I guess she and I would have hung together." He stirred uneasily and blinked. For the first time since the engagement had been broken it occurred to him that a distinct sense of relief accompanied a broken heart. It was certainly queer, he reflected with a puzzled scowl, but the fact remained that he was quite well satisfied with conditions as they were. Suppose—Good Lord, suppose Myra changed her mind again and wanted to take him back! He stared blankly into space. That would be a fearful bore! But she wouldn't, of course, for his mother had written him only a day or two before that Miss Warren's engagement to Carl Benson was as good as announced. She certainly wouldn't break two engagements the same



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winter. Philip chuckled. Fancy Benson if she did! He was absolutely the most conceited ass in New York and Philip was sure that the blow would kill him.

"Oh, no, that's safe enough; and so am I. But what a darned fool I was to mope around there and think the end of the world had come! Broken heart! Pshaw! It's as good as ever it was! And after all, Myra and I would never have hit it off. Why, we couldn't get on even when we were engaged! Think what it would have been a couple of years after marriage! Thunder, I ought to be thanking my lucky stars instead of posing around as a heart-broken lover!" He heaved a sigh of relief. "I suppose the fact of the matter is that I haven't really got any heart or any capacity for affection. That must be the trouble. Other fellows I've known have fallen in love and out again regularly two or three times a year, while I never was able to fake up any sort of an affair until Myra came along. I dare say then I was just bowled over by her looks and that Empress Josephine style of hers! I suppose when a chap is really in love he's

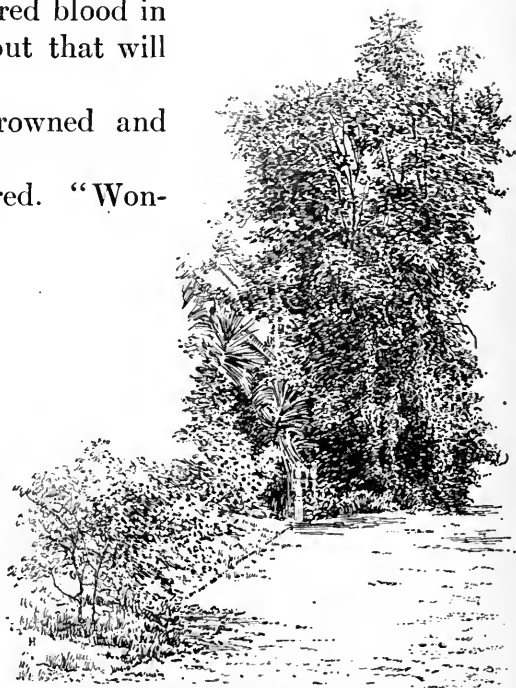


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pleased to death to have the girl walk all over him. And I never could stand that with Myra. She tried it often enough! No, I guess I don't know the rudiments of love. Probably too selfish. Maybe I'm just as well off, though. Fellows in love are awful fools; like the chap in this book." He fluttered the pages ruminatively. "I'd never do for the hero of a novel, that's plain. They always lose their appetites and talk whole pages of poppycock. Hang it, I couldn't even lose my appetite when I was running after Myra. And I'll bet she never lost hers," he added with a chuckle. "Myra," he added to himself cynically, "is what you would call an eminently sensible and practical young lady. And she's going to marry a man who hasn't an ounce of red blood in his whole make-up. Lordy, but that will be a wonderful combination!"

He looked at his watch, frowned and listened.

"It's after eleven," he muttered. "Wonder why she doesn't come."



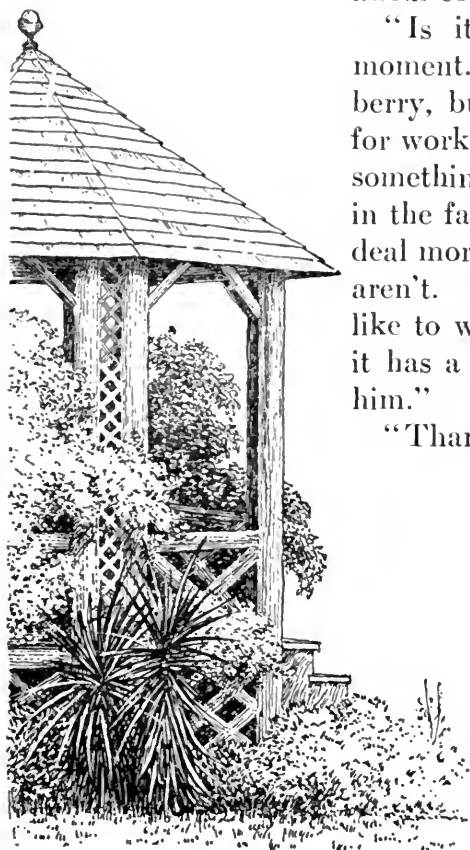
VIII.

WHEN she did come she seated herself on the edge of the porch with her brown head against a pillar, clasped her hands around one knee and sighed luxuriously.

"I don't like housekeeping, Mr. Weld," she confided. "I make believe I do, but I really don't. I'm lazy, awfully lazy. I just like to sit in the sunshine—like this—and read or sew or talk. Isn't that an awful confession to make?"

"Is it?" he asked. He considered a moment. "Yes, perhaps it is, Miss Mayberry, but then I don't suppose the liking for work is a great virtue. Seems to me it's something like this business of being brave in the face of danger. You deserve a good deal more credit if you're scared than if you aren't. Seems to me a person who doesn't like to work and still goes ahead and does it has a lot of bouquets coming to her—or him."

"Thanks," she laughed. "You're very





SHE SEATED HERSELF ON THE EDGE OF THE PORCH, WITH HER BROWN
HEAD AGAINST A PILLAR

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cheerful and soothing to the conscience, Mr. Weld."

"Sounds like a patent medicine; 'Weld's Mental Elixir! Cheers the Heart, Soothes the Conscience, and Softens the Brain! Ground under the Poor Food Tax.' "

Joyce beamed. "Oh, you can be silly, can't you?" she cried.

"Silly!" laughed Philip. "That's the best thing I do; I'm the originator of silliness, Miss Mayberry." He paused. "I'd really forgotten that I could be, though," he added. "I've been quite sensible for nearly two months. That's something of a record, isn't it? But why did you look so pleased when you discovered my one accomplishment? Are you partial to idiots, Miss Mayberry?"

"I was afraid you were terribly—terribly sober and serious, Mr. Weld. You know you Northerners *do* take life kind of—kind of *hard*, Mr. Weld."

"Really? I'm afraid the ones I know take it a bit too easily, Miss——"

"Would you mind calling me Miss Joyce?" she asked. "It's a heap shorter



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and I feel as though I ought to sit up and be very dignified when you say Miss Maybair."

"But I don't say that," replied Philip with a quizzical smile. Joyce looked puzzled.

"Don't say what?"

"Nothing: just some of my silliness, Miss Joyce. I'd very much rather call you Miss Joyce; it requires almost no effort."

"Are you lazy too?" she asked hopefully.

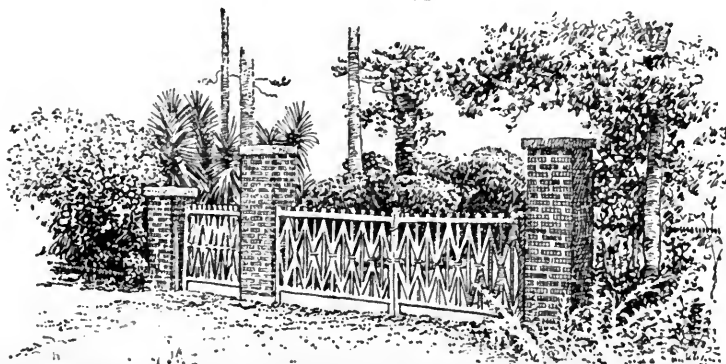
"Frightfully." But she shook her head.

"I don't believe it. You don't look lazy."

"Well, perhaps I'm not exactly lazy. That is, I'll take any amount of trouble to do a thing I like to do, such as—well, I've often played seventy-two holes at golf in a day or a dozen sets of tennis. And I'll walk my shoes off when it comes to hunting. But I can't really say that I've ever done anything useful; I've never done a lick of work, you know."

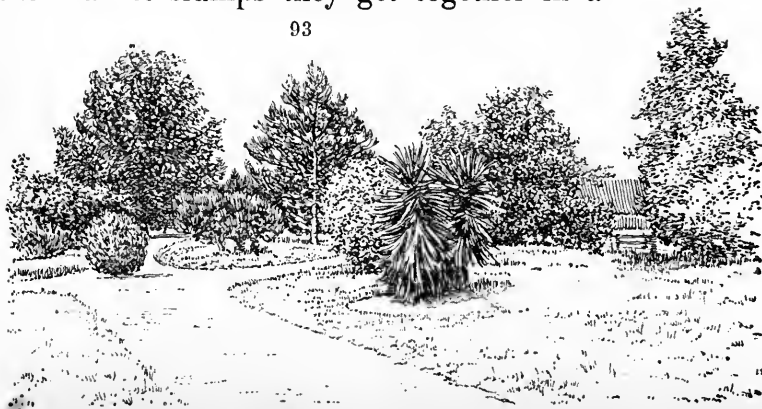
"Never worked! Then—then how do you live?"

"Well, I—the degrading truth is, Miss Joyce, that my father managed to make a good deal of money, and when I was twenty-



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one he put some of it into a bank in my name and handed me a pass-book. For a year or two I tried conscientiously to get away with it, but it was hard work; had to work nights, in fact; and I gave it up. Now I'm what you call an idler. I dare say I might open an office on Broad Street and buy a seat on the Exchange and so have an ostensible occupation. But it's a bore pretending to be something you're not. I have so many friends who pretend to be men of business and who have kept up the transparent deception so long that they have finally even succeeded in deceiving themselves. They read the market report over their eggs and coffee in the morning and then go to the telephone. 'Hello! That you, John? Anything doing this morning? No? Well, I'll be down later.' Sometimes they do get in a taxi and run down to the office for a few minutes before lunch, but more often, I guess, they have lunch first; in which case they're very likely not to go down at all. But they think they are really useful, hard-working members of society. When the market slumps they get together in a



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corner of the club and make a noise like a panic. Seems to me I'm doing a lot of talking, though," he ended apologetically.

"You live in New York, don't you, Mr. Weld?" Joyce asked.

"Yes. And the next time the Doctor takes you North you must let me return your hospitality, Miss Joyce."

"I've never been very far North yet; only to Norfolk and Washington. I'd love to see New York. It must be quite wonderful and gay," she said, a trifle wistfully.

"Wonderful? Yes, I guess it is. And it's gay enough on the surface. But it's terribly big and very heartless and rather cruel, too, Miss Joyce. I've seen enough of it to know that. And as far as I am concerned I like this much better."

He looked contentedly over the sunlit garden and back to the girl. She had plucked a leaf from the honeysuckle and was absently pinching it into tiny bits.

"That's because New York is an old story to you, I reckon," she said. "There was a girl at the Academy, in Athens, you know, who lived in New York. She was



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always talking about it and about the good times the people have there; theatres every night, and balls and parties, and dinners in wonderful restaurants and funny Bohemian places. It sounded just like what I've always thought Paris must be."

"Well, if you like that sort of thing," he began.

"Like it? Of course I like it," she flashed.

"Don't you?"

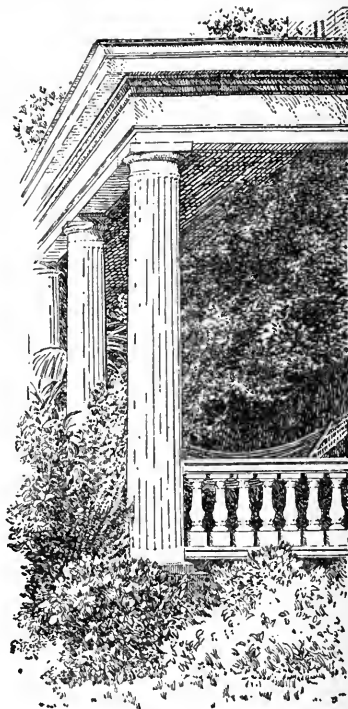
"By Jove, I could like it immensely if——" But he pulled up.

"Every girl likes parties and dances and theatres," she went on. "I'd rather dance than do anything—unless it's to go to the theatre and see a nice weepy play. And then there's opera, and that must be simply grand!"

"Some of it's simply light," he jested. She made a little face at him.

"And concerts! Oo—ee, I reckon I'd be pow'ful mis'able in New York," she laughed.

"You must come there!" declared Philip decisively. "This spring. And I'll take you to theatres and concerts until your feet ache and your head reels. And dances, too!"



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"Honestly? And will you dance every dance with me?" she laughed, "because, you see, I wouldn't know any one else."

"Wouldn't you!" he scoffed. "You'd have a train of admirers from here to—to the end of the lane, Miss Joyee! Will you come?"

"I wouldn't know what to do with so many admirers," she answered demurely. "I'd be terribly frightened, I reckon."

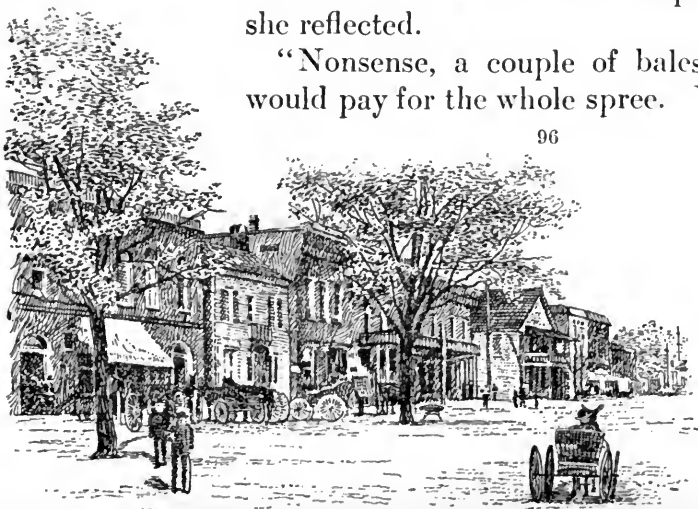
"Oh, I'd be there to keep them in order, Miss Joyee. I'd see that they did their admiring from a distance. *Now* will you come?"

"How can I? Indeed I would if I could, Mr. Weld. I don't mean that I'd think of letting you do things like—like that for me, but I'd love to go there. But Uncle Cass is always busy, you see."

"Uncle Cass must find a substitute," replied Philip determinedly. "I'll talk to him about it." But Joyee shook her head.

"I reckon it would cost a heap of money," she reflected.

"Nonsense, a couple of bales of cotton would pay for the whole spree. You see, as



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my guests—that is, our guests, Miss Joyce, you wouldn't be allowed to spend money. It's against the law of the city."

"Oh, but we couldn't visit you, Mr. Weld!"

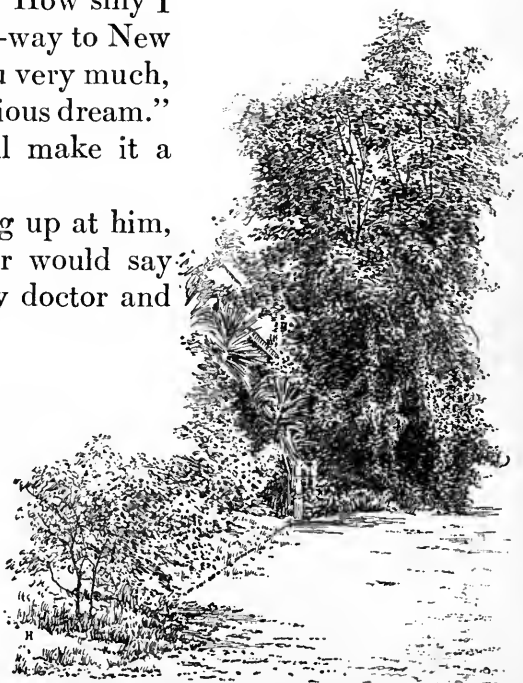
"Why not? I'm visiting you, am I not? There's only my mother and father, you know; my sister is away at college; and they'd be just simply pleased purple to have you and Doctor Mayberry visit them. And you'd like mother, too. She's a good sort. And father would lose his heart to you on the instant and I'd have to watch him like anything to prevent an elopement."

Joyce's eyes shone and her lips parted breathlessly.

"Oh, if I could!" she exclaimed. Then her face fell and she sighed. "How silly I am," she laughed. "I was half-way to New York for a second. Thank you very much, Mr. Weld. It's a perfectly delicious dream."

"Dream? Nonsense! We'll make it a reality; you'll see!"

"I wonder," she said, smiling up at him, "what your mother and father would say if you told them that a country doctor and



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his country niece from Ridge, South Carolina, were coming to visit them."

"They would say," replied Philip promptly: "'Is that the Doctor Mayberry who took such good care of you when you were sick?' And I'd say that it was. And they'd ask: 'And is the niece the charming young lady who was so kind to you when you——'"

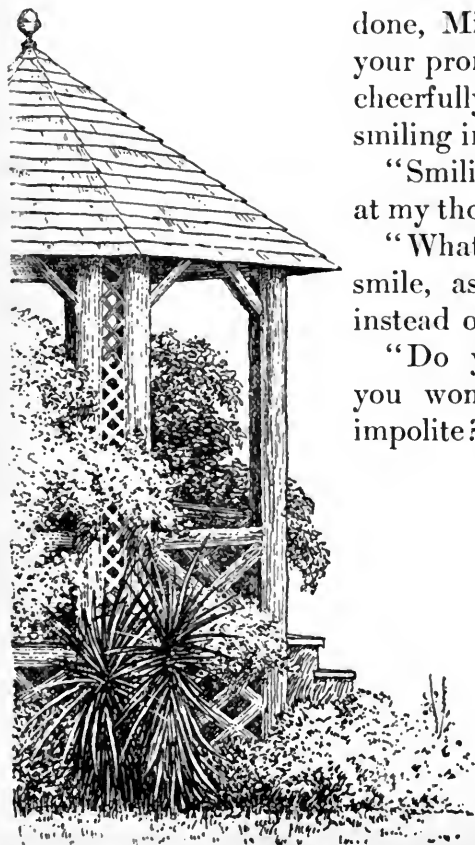
"Mr. Weld!" Joyce interrupted. "You're just being silly! The idea of our visiting your people when we've never met them! That *would* be funny!"

"Such ridiculous things are constantly done, Miss Joyce, and I shall hope to get your promise before I leave," replied Philip cheerfully. "May I inquire why you are smiling in that way?"

"Smiling?" repeated Joyce guiltily. "Just at my thoughts, I reckon, Mr. Weld."

"What were they? It was a peculiar smile, as though you were smiling *at* me instead of *with* me. May I know?"

"Do you really want to know? And you won't think me—think me rude—impolite?"



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“Never! I swear on the Seven Silver Spoons!”

“The what?” asked Joyce. “The seven what?”

“Never mind; it’s just a swear. Go on and tell me.”

“We—ell, I was thinking—Oh, but it *does* sound rude, Mr. Weld, and I’d rather not.”

“I insist,” he replied sternly. “If you don’t tell me I shall think it something much worse than it is.”

“But you’ll promise not to be offended?” she begged.

“Cross my heart!”

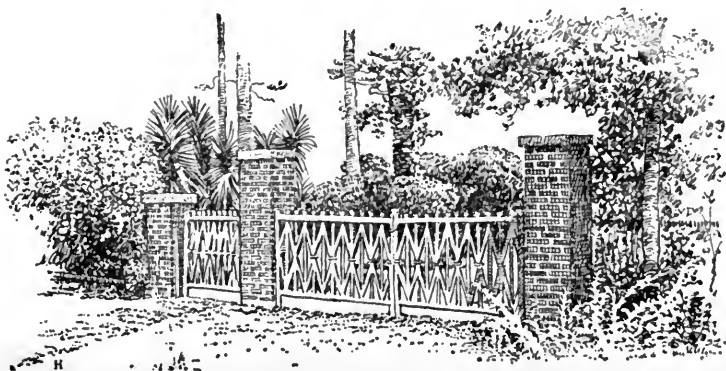
“We—ell, then,” said Joyce, her eyes at once mischievous and conciliating, “I was just thinking how queerly you No’the’ners p’nounce your wo’ds.”



IX.

THE Old Doctor got home shortly before dinner, but Sanford ate his repast tied to the hitching-post under the big mulberry. The Old Doctor's manner was hurried and his expression troubled as he stopped for a moment on the porch and then proceeded to the Surgery, as the little office tacked to the rear of the house was called. He remained there until dinner-time, and during the meal, the first at which Philip had appeared, was silent and distraight. The diphtheria patient was having a hard time, he explained with a shake of his grizzled head, and he reckoned he would be kind of late for supper. The Old Doctor took his patients' troubles a good deal to heart; was much too sympathetic for his own happiness.

"He will come home all worn out to-night," said Joyce with a sigh after her uncle had driven off again. "Last winter Mrs. Ditmar—she's the Presbyterian minister's wife; they live in that cute little

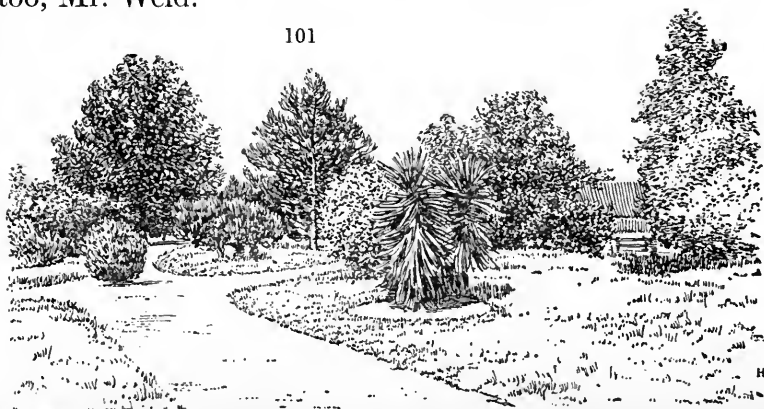


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yellow house next to the brick church, you know—Mrs. Ditmar had pneumonia and came the nearest thing to dying. They had Doctor Kennedy over from Augusta in consultation, and he and Uncle Cass just had to fight and *fight* all one night. They won, too, but poor Uncle Cass was just a wreck for weeks afterwards. Sometimes I think he ought to give up practising, but I don't know; I reckon he'd be awfully sort of lonely with nothing to do but just look after the plantation."

"He must have to work pretty hard, too," said Philip. "His practice seems to be scattered over the whole county. Surely there can't be very much money in it for him."

"There isn't. Besides, Uncle Cass never keeps any books and never knows who owes him. And when the first of the year comes he starts a clean slate, as he calls it; those that haven't paid needn't unless they want to. And he almost never charges the negroes anything for tending them. It's perfectly silly! And folks impose on him dreadfully, too, Mr. Weld."



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Philip nodded. "Yes, I fancy they could," he agreed.

"If it was just the money," continued Joyce, "I reckon he'd have quit practising long ago. But he likes it and he thinks the folks can't get along without him; and some of them couldn't, I reckon. He's just a perfect dear, Mr. Weld, but he's tol'able tryin' at times!"

Philip laughed.

"He has certainly been a 'perfect dear' to me," he said. "I can't think why he wanted to have me out here at Mayberry, Miss Joyce."

"He likes you," answered Joyce. "I've heard your praises sung for two weeks, Mr. Weld."

"Great Heaven! If I'd known that I'd never have come. You must have detested the thought of me long before I appeared."

"No, I was just sort of curious to see you, Mr. Weld."

"Hm; and now that you've seen me?"

"O—oh, you're fishing!"

"Well, anyway, tell me that you're not terribly disappointed, Miss Joyce."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"I'm not. So far you've been—rather nice," she replied demurely.

"Thank you. In return let me tell you that I *was* disappointed in you, Miss Joyce, agreeably disappointed. You see, your Uncle spoke of you as 'a slip of a girl,' and I—well, I pictured you as rather different."

"But I am a slip of a girl," said Joyce. "A very small slip, too. So I don't see——"

"Well, I rather expected to find you quite a child, and a bit shy and—and awkward, maybe."

"And I'm not shy?" she asked anxiously.

"You're quite charming in every way."

"Pooh! Anybody could beg the question that way, Mr. Weld."

"Well, you're not shy in the way I meant."

"I suppose, then, I'm quite—quite brazen," she said sadly.

"The adjective would never have occurred to me," laughed Philip. "Let me tell you confidentially what I feared the most. I was terribly afraid that you would *giggle!*"

"Oh! And I don't? Truly, Mr. Weld, I don't know whether I do or not."

"I assure you solemnly that you don't."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

On the contrary, Miss Joyce, your laugh is——”

“What? Don’t stop there, for goodness’ sake!”

“Not the least of your many charms, Miss Joyce.”

“Well,” began Joyce, “for a man who——” But there she stopped, while a wave of color flooded her face.

“Go on, please.”

“No; nothing.”

“Please! ‘For a man who ——’ Go on.”

Joyce shook her head violently, avoiding his eyes and waiting for her cheeks to cool. Finally,

“For a Northerner you are extremely complimentary,” she murmured.

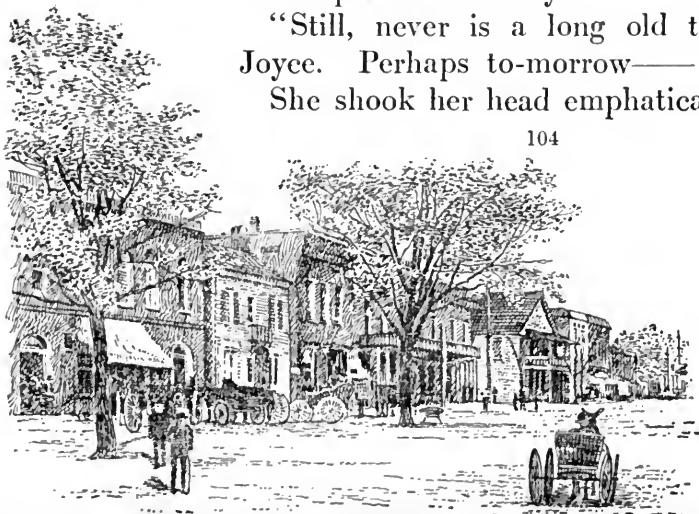
“Really? But that isn’t what you started to say. Aren’t you going to tell me?”

“Never! It was something awful, Mr. Weld! I don’t see how I ever came to even think it!”

Philip whistled softly.

“Still, never is a long old time, Miss Joyce. Perhaps to-morrow——”

She shook her head emphatically.



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"Or next week——"

She shook her head again.

"Or, anyway, before I leave——"

"We—ell," said Joyce, smiling a little, "perhaps—before you leave."

"That's better. By that time, Miss Joyce, we shall be such excellent friends that we can share each other's inmost secrets—whatever those are. Have you any inmost secrets?"

Joyce thought deeply.

"Not a one, Mr. Weld! What a humiliating confession, isn't it?"

"Awful! Still—it isn't too late. We might—share one between us, Miss Joyce."

She leaned forward eagerly.

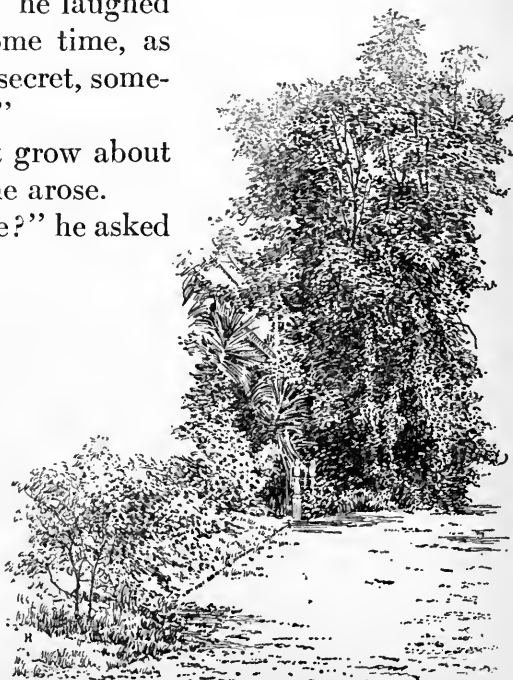
"Do let's, Mr. Weld! What shall it be?"

Philip pulled himself up sharply.

"Oh, we'll have to find one," he laughed lightly. "And it may take some time, as this must be a very interesting secret, something quite out of the ordinary."

"I'm afraid that sort doesn't grow about here," she said regretfully as she arose.

"You're not going to leave me?" he asked protestingly.



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Yes. And you mustn't stay out here very late because it gets cool in the afternoon. Shall I tell Ajax to help you in after a while?"

"Great Scott, no! I'm quite able to help myself in, thanks. But I'm going to see you again, Miss Joyce?"

"Of course," she laughed. "I hope to be at the supper-table, Mr. Weld."

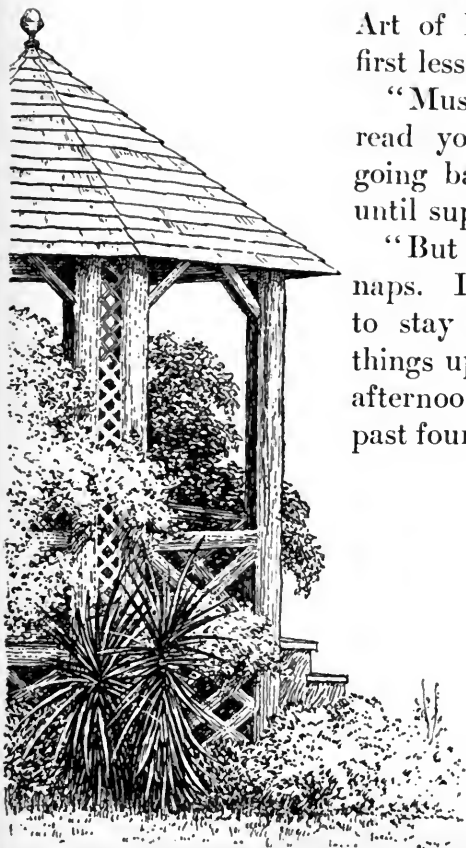
"But that's a long way off. I don't think a hostess has any right to neglect her guest as you propose doing."

"But I told you I wasn't a good hostess."

"And you agreed to take lessons in the Art of Hostessry, Miss Joyce. Now, the first lesson——"

"Must be postponed. You're going to read your book a while and then you're going back to your room and take a nap until supper-time, Mr. Weld."

"But I don't want to read and I hate naps. I'm full of sleep now. I shall have to stay awake night after night to even things up. I don't see why you don't serve afternoon tea to me in the library at half-past four."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Because I haven't the slightest idea how to make tea," Joyce replied laughingly, "and Aunt Emma won't be back until nearly six."

"Aunt Emma is the cook?"

"Yes."

"I can make tea, Miss Joyce. I've done it lots of times."

But Joyce shook her head.

"We're not a bit fashionable out here, Mr. Weld. Besides, I shall probably be sound asleep myself at half-past four, I reckon. Mustn't the hostess have a nap in the afternoon?"

Philip shook his head.

"Never! It's contrary to all laws of social usage and—er—decorum. The hostess entertains her guests."

"But not every minute of the day!" she protested.

"Every minute," declared Philip gravely. "And when the guest is an invalid he should have even more attention. In that case the hostess—er—brings him flowers and reads to him and—and cheers him up generally."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"How awful—for the guest!" she exclaimed.

"The guest likes it."

"Then he's never heard his hostess read aloud. Besides, the hostess has duties to perform. There's supper to think about, and letters to write and other things."

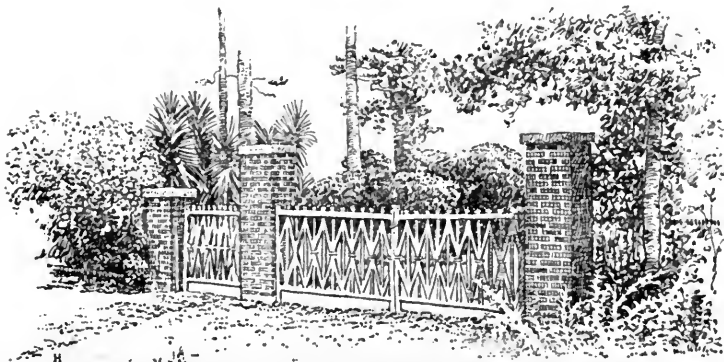
"Letters," mused Philip suspiciously. "Well, in that case—— But remember that I shall be very unhappy, Miss Joyce; remember that you are treating me very shabbily."

"I'll have Aunt Emma cook you something nice for supper. What do you like?"

"Nothing," answered Philip gloomily. "And I can't be bought off with food. I know my rights."

"I'm sorry," said Joyce contritely. "But really, I *must* go, Mr. Weld." She hesitated, looking down at him for a moment. He refused to see her. "Oh, dear," she sighed, "I don't know whether you're in earnest or not! Are you really—really hurt because I don't stay, Mr. Weld?"

"Wounded to the quick," replied Philip. "But it's of no consequence." He waved



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toward the corner. "Don't consider me, Miss Joyce; go to your letters."

"You're too silly for words," she laughed. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," he murmured sadly.

At the corner of the porch she turned her head and smiled back at him. Then she was gone. Philip took up his book, viewed it a moment and laid it down again. Then he sighed, smiled, and filled a pipe.

"Careful, old man," he whispered, "careful!"

He smoked for a while in silence, looking down over the old garden. Finally,

"There isn't a ring, anyhow," he informed the honeysuckle.



X.

HE did sleep, however, although he assured himself that he wasn't going to. He stretched himself out on the old chintz-covered couch with the vivid quilt over him and his book in his hand. The sun was nearing the tops of the pines against the skyline and a little fresh breeze, fragrant of newly-turned earth and flowers, rustled the shades at the windows. From somewhere toward the quarters came the sound of a song, monotonous, whining, hypnotic. Philip pictured Ajax or another of the darkies seated in the warm sunshine outside the stable-door singing at his work from sheer joy of life. Now and then a hen clucked and afar off a hound bayed in a thicket. But the world seemed nid-nid-nodding in the afternoon sunlight, and presently Philip closed his eyes and his book slid from his hand.

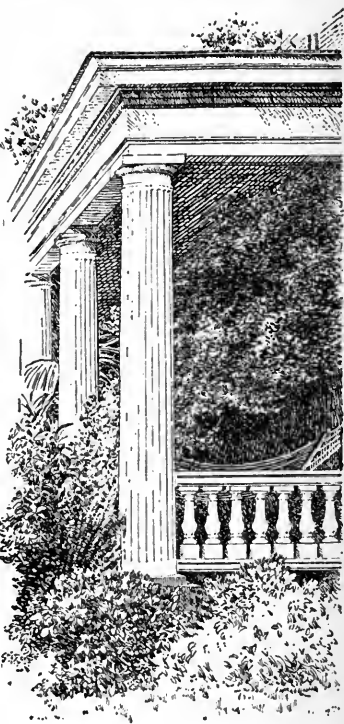
The Old Doctor didn't return for supper that night, but after Philip was abed he heard the buggy come up the lane and



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caught the flash of a lantern on the white ceiling as Ajax went to meet it. He wondered whether the Old Doctor had been fighting again and whether he had won or lost. The buggy creaked tiredly by on its way to the barn and the Doctor's lagging feet crossed the hall toward the Surgery. A feeling that was partly pity and partly admiration stirred Philip.

"Poor old chap," he pondered. "It seems to me he's getting mighty little out of life, but he evidently doesn't feel that way about it. He missed the woman he wanted, he's seen most of his land pass into other hands, and now he's drudging away day after day, and many a night too, I fancy, and getting little enough for it. I suppose that in all his fifty-odd years nothing really *big* has ever happened to him, and I suppose nothing ever will. But he's contented and happy and cheerful and plays the game like a gentleman. And that woman he didn't marry—what was it he said about her? That she had chosen a better man and was very happy; that that had always been a great joy to him! I'll bet whoever she mar-

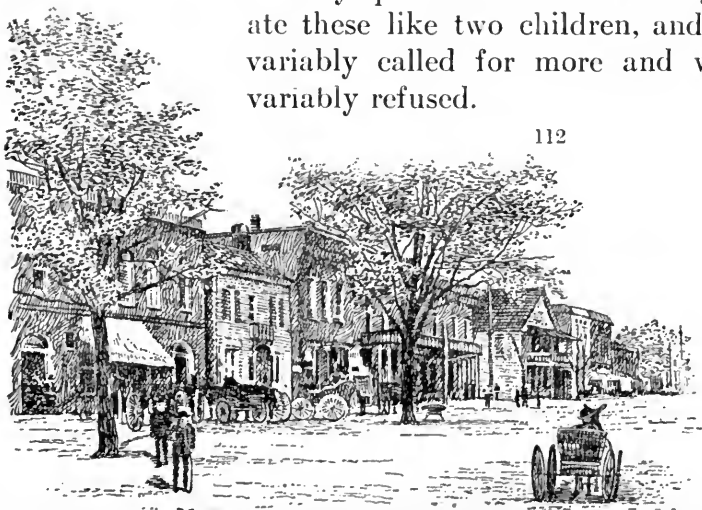


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ried she missed the best one of the two! I wonder if I could ever feel that way if——”

His thoughts became chaotic for a moment and a pair of big brown eyes looked at him out of the darkness. He sighed deeply and happily and went to sleep.

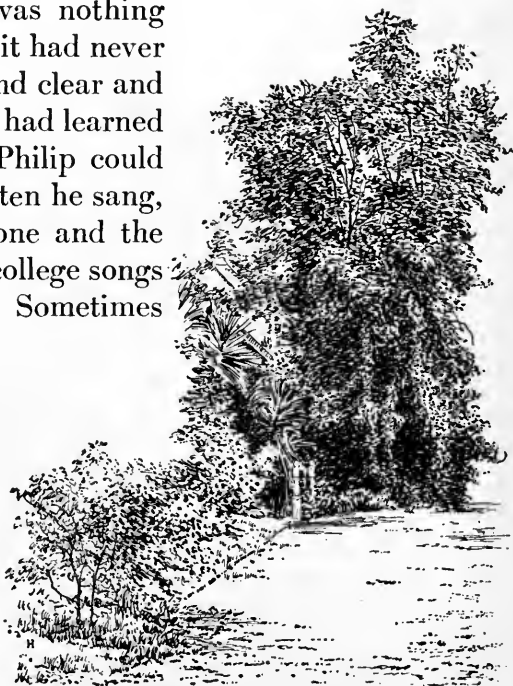
Outwardly one day was much like another at Mayberry. The sky remained cloudless and blue, the sunlight bathed hill and valley with glorious warmth. The little leaves grew to big ones, bare fields became tinged with young green, and in the garden the buds swelled and opened. Spring quickened the world. After breakfast Philip sat on the porch and read his mail and the Augusta paper of the evening before and waited for Joyce to finish her household duties. Then followed a long lazy morning that always seemed ridiculously short, to Philip at least. In the middle of it Joyce would disappear for a few minutes and return with two slices of buttered bread lavishly sprinkled with brown sugar. They ate these like two children, and Philip invariably called for more and was as invariably refused.



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"Eating between meals," Joyce would gravely assure him, "is a ve'y bad habit."

Usually the Old Doctor was home for dinner. There had been one day, the day after Philip had heard him return late at night, when he came to dinner looking very tired and discouraged, and Joyce knew, and Philip learned through her, that the fight against diphtheria had been lost. That afternoon the Old Doctor shut himself up in the Surgery and only came out when supper was ready. But usually he was the best of company and a most genial host. Supper was always a merry occasion and sometimes the three sat about the old mahogany table until Marietta literally drove them away. After that Joyce played for them, and sang, too. There was nothing remarkable about her voice and it had never been trained, but it was sweet and clear and the negro songs she crooned she had learned from the darkies themselves. Philip could never hear enough of them. Often he sang, too. He had a very fair baritone and the Old Doctor liked the rollicking college songs that comprised his repertoire. Sometimes

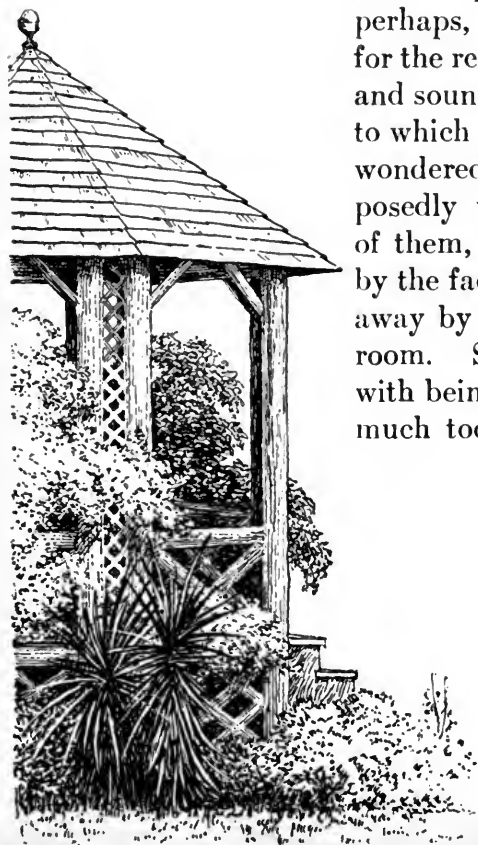


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they played cards; three-handed cribbage when Joyce could be prevailed on to join them; bezique when she couldn't. Usually she preferred to sit by and look on; she was not a good card-player and had a disconcerting trick of doing the most outlandish things just to watch the effect on the others. One must take the game seriously to attain perfection and Joyce never did.

"Oh, shucks, Marse Doctor!" she would laugh. "This yer ain' nothin' but jus' play, honey!"

The afternoons were likely to drag a little for Philip. Joyce gave him a scant hour, perhaps, between dinner and supper and for the rest of the time remained out of sight and sound in that mysterious upstairs region to which he had never penetrated. He often wondered about the letters she was supposedly writing. He never saw anything of them, though that was easily explainable by the fact that the morning mail was taken away by Ajax before Philip was out of his room. Somehow he couldn't credit her with being much of a letter-writer. She was much too fond of talking, and those who



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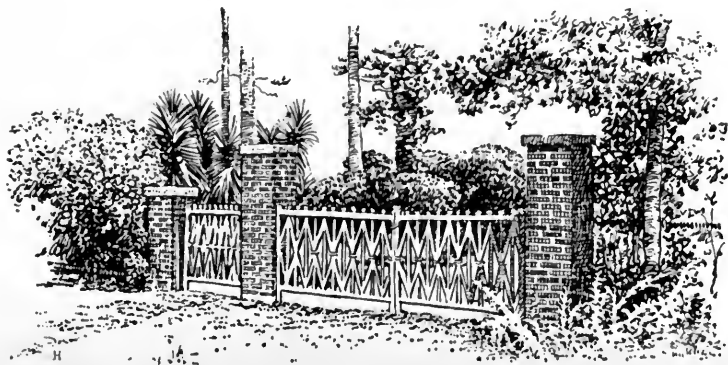
love to talk seldom run to long letters. He was certain of one thing, however, and found comfort in it, and that was that, no matter how many letters Joyce wrote, she seldom received any. The mail came just at breakfast-time and Marietta brought it in to the Old Doctor and the Old Doctor distributed it across the table. Joyce's share was very slim.

Day by day Philip's rheumatism lessened. When he had been at Mayberry four days he discarded the cane and, save for an occasional twinge, felt no discomfort. The Old Doctor still kept him on a diet, however, and still dosed him with medicine, which he mixed himself from the bottles on the shelves of the Surgery. Philip declared that no two mixtures ever tasted the same and the Old Doctor laughed and told him that variety was the spice of life. One morning Philip challenged Joyce to a game of croquet and made the discovery that there was considerably more to it than he had suspected. For Joyce simply ran away from him and he spent most of his time rescuing his ball from distant portions of the grove to which Joyce sent it at every opportunity. But he



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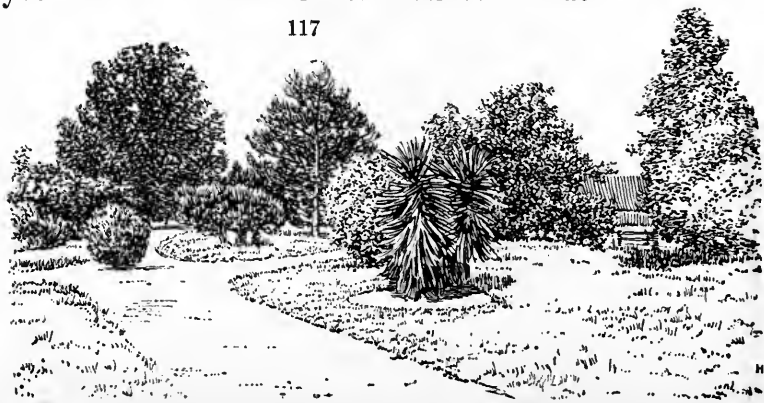
didn't mind being beaten, for his antagonist thought it the best joke in the world and enjoyed it thoroughly. Then came a day when the Old Doctor declared his patient well enough to go driving, and Ajax hitched Joyce's saddle mare to the best buggy and Joyce drove him through miles of fragrant wood hung with golden jasmine garlands and carpeted with blue violets, over silent sandy roads. After that they roamed the country east and west, north and south; visited the show-place of a Northern millionaire; drove for miles through a private game preserve; went to the Boiling Spring and watched it throw up its clouds of sand. The horse, whose unpoetical name was Miss Brown, was not an ideal roadster, for she frequently forgot that she was in harness and broke into a canter that never failed to arouse the mirth of the occupants of the buggy. Life in those days contained a great deal of mirth. They were forever finding something to laugh over together, and already they shared a number of harmless little jokes with which they teased the Old Doctor. By this time they each knew about



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all there was to be known of the other's story. Philip had failed, however, to touch on his recently broken engagement and Joyce had so far neglected to acquaint him with her recently acquired one. And, as was to be expected, Philip awoke each morning a little more eager for his meeting with Joyce and said good-night to her each night a little more unwillingly. And the Old Doctor, from his place in the audience, looked on and smiled to himself, and sighed as often as he smiled.

And Joyce? Dear, Dear Reader, who am I to hazard even a guess as to what was going on inside that young lady's brain or heart. All I can tell you is that she seemed very happy, very merry, very vital in those days. She came singing down the stairs in the morning and sang as she went about her duties. But that perhaps was just because she was young and spring was in the world and the sun shone and the sky was as clearly blue as a baby's eyes. Just in that way the birds sang in the chinaberry and magnolia trees morning after morning, and it's not for you or me to seek for hidden motives. Youth



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and spring have ever been and always will be excuse for song and laughter. But the Old Doctor, having seen many springs in his time, had his thoughts. And one day he asked a question.

It was just a week after Philip's arrival, and the Old Doctor and Joyce were together in the Surgery. Breakfast was over, Sanford was impatiently pawing at the mossy gravel beside the hitching-post, and the Old Doctor was vainly trying to fill some empty phials in his medicine-case.

"Dear, dear," he muttered, "calomel's out again, and where in the land o' the living is that bottle of codeine tablets?"

Joyce leaned against a corner of the cluttered desk and watched him amusedly.

"Uncle Cass, you asked the same question the day before yesterday and decided that you had used your codeine tablets all up. You made a memorandum to get another bottle."

"Did I?" The Old Doctor referred to his little red book. "Hm; so I did. I must remember to get them to-day. Anything wanted in town, my dear?"



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"Lots of things, but nothing you can get. I reckon I'll just have to drive in myself to-day or to-morrow. I reckon I can take Mr. Weld along, can't I?"

"Don't think it would do him any harm, Joyce. By the way, speaking of Mr. Weld——" The Old Doctor scowled attentively at the discolored label of a bottle which he had taken from a shelf——

"Wonder what that is." He smelled it, tasted it gingerly, and shook his head. "Reckon it's something, but plagued if I know what!"

"What were you going to say about Mr. Weld?" Joyce prompted.

"Oh; I was wondering what he said when you told him about your being engaged."

There was silence for a moment.

"Eh?" The Old Doctor snapped his bag shut.

"I haven't told him yet," said Joyce carelessly.

"Bless us! Why not?"

"Because—I couldn't. I haven't had a chance. I can't just go up to him and put my hands behind me and say: 'Mr. Weld,



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I'm engaged to be married!' Now, can I? Don't you see that it would look very—very *funny*? As though I was warning him not to—to—you know!"

"Hm; but how about his thinking things, my dear? You know you were afraid——"

"Yes, but I don't believe he does think things, Uncle."

"Glad of it. Just the same, my dear, I reckon it would be best to—er—let him understand that he mustn't lose his heart to you, Joyce."

"Pooh! I reckon there's no danger."

The Old Doctor shook his head.

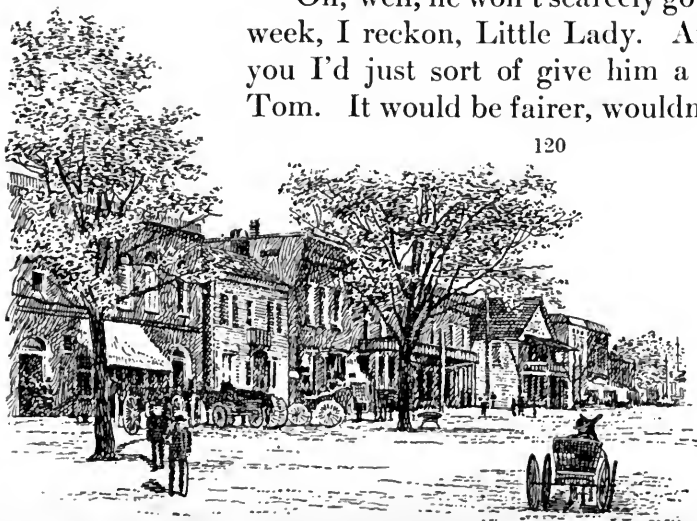
"I'm not so certain about that."

"Anyway, he will be going pretty soon now, I suppose."

"Going? Why, don't he like us here? Anything wrong?"

"No, but he's almost well, isn't he? I reckon he doesn't intend to stay here all the spring, Uncle."

"Oh, well, he won't scarcely go for another week, I reckon, Little Lady. And if I was you I'd just sort of give him a hint about Tom. It would be fairer, wouldn't it?"



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"I suppose so," answered Joyce thoughtfully. "Only—maybe it would be better if you did it, Uncle. You *could*, you see, without its sounding funny." But the Old Doctor shook his head decisively.

"No, *ma'am!*" he declined.

Joyce sighed and frowned.

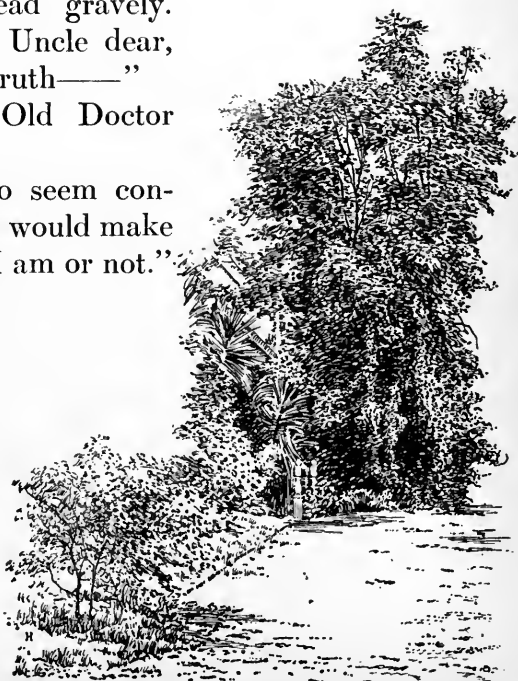
"Well," she murmured, "if I *must*——" She looked at her uncle for signs of relenting, but the Old Doctor's silence intimated that she must. She sighed again. Then she brightened and laughed softly. "I know!" she exclaimed. "I'll put on mama's engagement ring, Uncle Cass. Then I won't have to say a thing—unless he asks me!"

"'Pears to me," he said as he picked up his bag and his hat, "that's a sort of quibbling way of doing it, ain't it, Joyce?"

"No." She shook her head gravely. "No, it's quite the best way, Uncle dear, because it lets him know the truth——"

"The truth?" asked the Old Doctor quizzically.

"Mh-mh; without having to seem conceited enough to suppose that it would make any difference to him whether I am or not."



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Joyce ended breathless but triumphant. The Old Doctor chuckled and made a gesture of resignation.

"Reckon it's all right, Joyce, but I'm plagued if I quite get the sense of it, my dear."

"It isn't sense; it's nonsense," she replied serenely. "It's all nonsense, the whole thing."

"What whole thing?" He stopped in the doorway and faced her puzzledly.

"Everything!" Joyce swept her arm around to apparently include "the scheme of things entire."

"Oh! Well, I'm off. I'll leave it to you, Little Lady. Just so's he don't come to any harm, you understand."

"Huh," murmured Joyce when he had gone, "I reckon it doesn't matter what happens to me so long as he isn't damaged any!"



XI.

MEN are very stupid things. She had been there almost an hour with the little diamond flashing in the sunlight on her engagement finger and he hadn't even seen it. She flicked a crumb from her lap and wiped her fingers, sticky with brown sugar, on her handkerchief, ostentatiously parading the ring as she did so.

"We're going to drive to Ridge after dinner," she announced.

"Are we?" asked Philip lazily. "Meaning you and me?"

"Meaning you and me," echoed Joyce.

"Do you want to go?"

"Does that matter?" he asked smilingly.

"You said we were going."

"You needn't unless you want to. *I have* to. I must buy things, all sorts of things. Maybe, though, you won't like sitting in the buggy and waiting outside."

"In which case I shall get out and help you buy things," answered Philip. "I'm

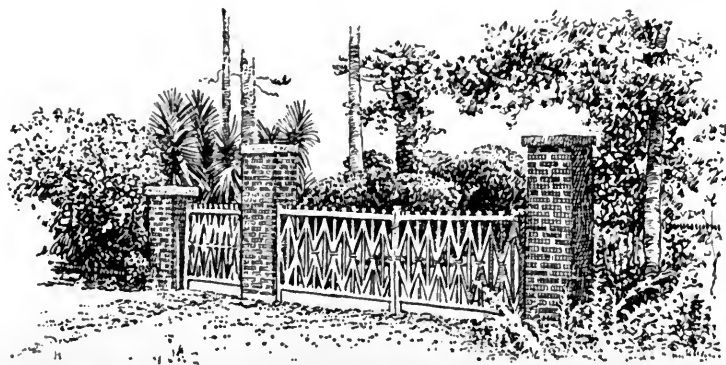


quite an accomplished buyer, Miss Joyce."

"Pooh, I reckon you buy like all men. You just go and look at a thing and tell the man to wrap it up. And then when you get it you ask how much it is."

"Not at all," replied Philip stoutly. "We will suppose that I am buying a scarf. I enter the store with a stern, not-to-be-imposed-on expression. I say to the clerk: 'How much are your scarfs?' 'We have them from one dollar to four, sir,' he replies very humbly. 'Hum,' say I, 'you may show me the four-dollar ones.' He does so and I look them over coldly and disapprovingly. 'These are the best you have?' 'Yes, sir, but we can make you up some from your own material if you wish.' 'These are worth four dollars?' I ask, fixing him with my glittering eye. 'They are indeed, sir. We absolutely lose money on them at that figure. The duty alone brings them to three-eighty-nine.' 'Then the more I buy the more you lose?' I ask him. He agrees. 'Then,' I say triumphantly, 'you may send me home six!'"

Joyce laughed.



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"Of course you don't mean that you really pay four dollars for a necktie, though," she said.

"No, when they're over a dollar they're scarfs."

"How much did the one you have on cost?"

He felt of it. "What color is it, please?"

"Sort of purplish," she replied uncertainly. "Purple with gray in it, I reckon."

"Then it cost me exactly four dollars."

"How perfectly foolish! You oughtn't to be allowed to buy your ties."

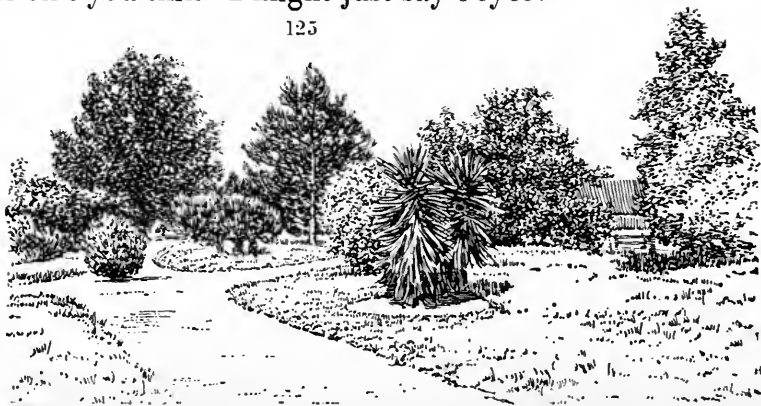
"When you come to New York you shall do it for me," he answered cheerfully.

"I reckon I could get them for less than four dollars," said Joyce scornfully.

"I'm sure you could. I remember seeing one just like this in a window on Broadway for a dollar and a half."

"Then why——"

"Because," he laughed, "I'm a good American. I like to be imposed on, Miss Joyce. By the way, I wonder if you'd care much if I dropped the 'Miss.' Would you? Don't you think I might just say Joyce?"



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"Of course," she answered serenely. "And I shall call you Philip. I reckon we know each other well enough, don't you?"

"I certainly do," replied Philip. But he was dimly disappointed that she had accepted the proposal so indifferently. Evidently it mattered not at all to her what he called her. "Joyce," he went on, "is such a nice name that it's a pity to spoil the sound of it by putting anything in front."

"Do you really like it?" she asked, tilting her head on one side a trifle, which was a trick of hers, and closing her eyes a little.

"More than any name I know," he answered promptly. "Don't you?"

"Yes, I do. At the Academy the girls used to call me Joy. I reckon it was easier and quicker."

"And mighty appropriate," said Philip. "But there's another name that suits you even better."

Joyce looked a question.

"Little Lady," he answered softly, caressingly.

Joyce dropped her eyes, the color warming in her cheeks.



"Only Uncle Cass and Marietta call me that now," she said. "That was Marietta's name for me when I was a weeny baby. Mama used to call me that, too, but papa always called me Joycie."

"You have lots of names, haven't you? But Little Lady is the nicest of all. Perhaps some day, when we get to be very, very good friends, I may call you Little Lady too. May I?"

"Perhaps—some day," answered Joyce softly, her eyes avoiding him. "I don't reckon, though, we'll ever get to be very, *very* good friends, do you?"

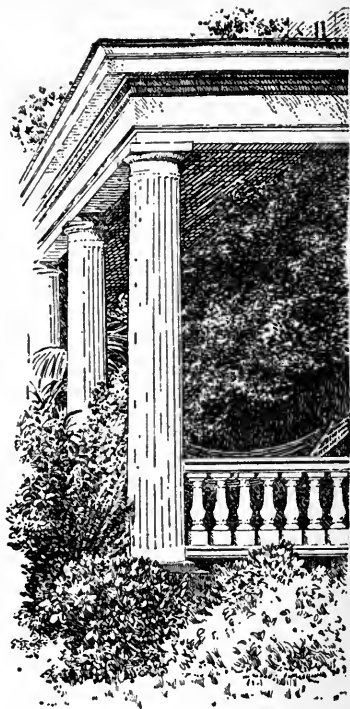
"Why not? It depends on what you call 'very, *very* good friends,' Joyce. Aren't we almost that now?"

"Ye—es, but I don't reckon I'd like you to call me Little Lady, Mr. Weld; not yet."

"I understand. That, then, is a favor I must work for, a sort of decoration of honor. I wonder whether——"

He stopped. Joyce's ring had slipped from her finger and trickled across the porch.

"Please!" she said quickly. "Don't bother!"



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But he was ahead of her; had recovered it and was looking curiously at it as he handed it back.

"Thanks," she murmured, "but you shouldn't try to stoop."

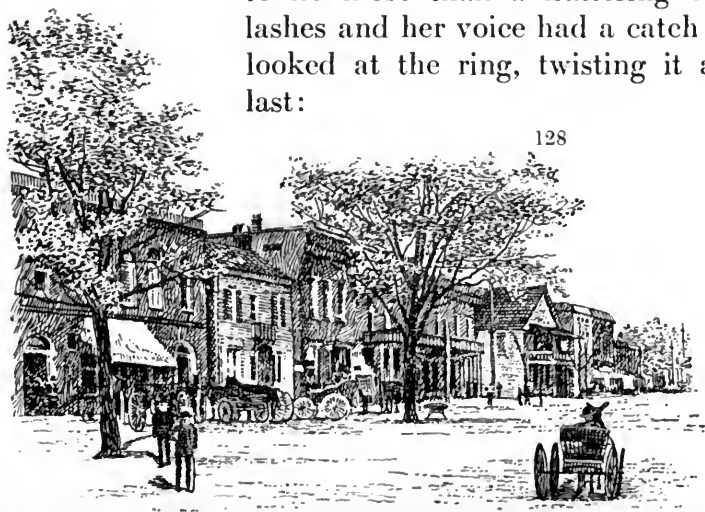
She held it hidden in her hand instead of slipping it back on her finger, aware that he was waiting and watching.

"That's a new ring, isn't it?" he asked after a moment.

"No, it's an old one," she replied very, very casually, "but I haven't been wearing it." She smiled and slipped it on to her finger. But she didn't look across at him just then. There was a silence on the porch. Then he said in a voice that didn't sound quite right:

"May I ask if it's an engagement ring, Miss Joyce? Does it belong—where you've put it?"

"Yes." Joyce tried to say it naturally and tried to smile, but the smile amounted to no more than a fluttering of her eyelashes and her voice had a catch in it. She looked at the ring, twisting it about. At last:



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"I didn't know that you were engaged," he said very stiffly. "I think you neglected to mention it, didn't you?"

"Did I? I don't suppose it occurred to me," fibbed Joyce, elaborately careless.

"I dare say not." He turned away, frowning sombrely into the garden.

"It's funny your uncle didn't speak of it, either," he muttered.

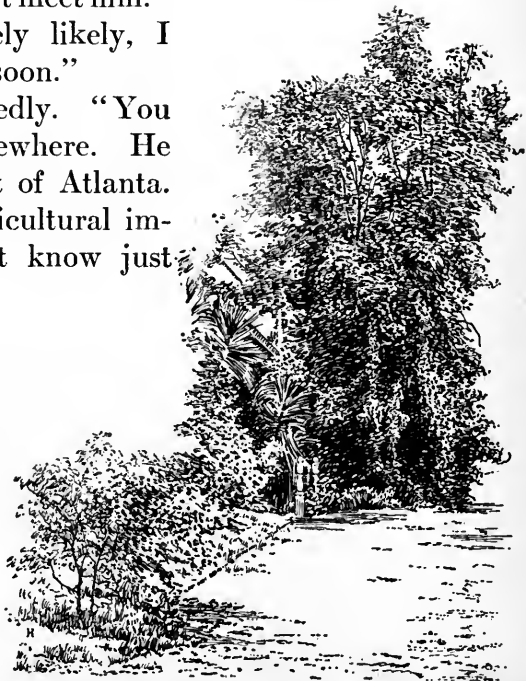
"Oh; Uncle Cass wouldn't," laughed Joyce. "It's really surprising he even mentioned my name to you. After all, you know, I'm just a slip of a girl!"

"Who is the lucky man, if I may ask?" inquired Philip blandly.

"Tom Darrell. He lives in Augusta. We're distant cousins. He—he's rather nice, Mr. Weld. I wish you might meet him."

"Thanks, but that's scarcely likely, I fancy, unless you expect him soon."

"Oh, no," said Joyce hurriedly. "You see, he's away, travelling somewhere. He travels for Murdock and Hoyt of Atlanta. They're the big dealers in agricultural implements, you know. I don't know just where Tom is at present."



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"You don't know where he is!" exclaimed Philip. "Do you mean that he doesn't write to you?"

"Why, of course he does, only—not very often," answered Joyce hurriedly. "You see he doesn't care much for letter-writing, and neither do I."

"May I enquire how long you have been—engaged?"

"Oh, it is—let me see." Joyce shut her eyes and frowned intently. "I think it must have been about Christmas-time he asked me last."

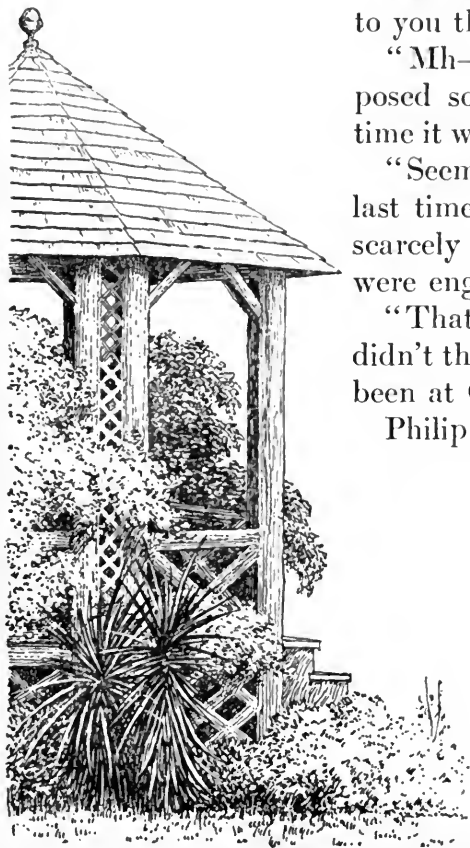
"Asked you last? You mean he proposed to you then?"

"Mh—mh; you see, Mr. Weld, he's proposed so often that I almost forget which time it was!"

"Seems to me it would naturally be the last time," he said ironically. "He would scarcely propose marriage to you after you were engaged to him."

"That's so," said Joyce brightly. "I didn't think of that. Of course it *must* have been at Christmas time."

Philip frowned in puzzlement.



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"It must have made a deep impression on you," he said sarcastically.

"I don't see why you speak to me so crossly about it," answered Joyce aggrievedly. "Haven't I a perfect right to be engaged if I want to? You talk as though—as though I'd done something perfectly awful!"

"I beg your pardon," Philip muttered. "Of course you have the right to be engaged. Only—I suppose I was naturally a little bit surprised. You never said anything about it."

"Why should I? For all I know you may be engaged too—or married! You've never said anything either, have you?"

"No; but I'm not," he said shortly.

"Then it's time you were," returned Joyce ungraciously. "How old are you, please?"

"I'm twenty-six, but that has nothing to do with it. I have no idea of being married."

"M—mm," said Joyce with a wise shake of her head, "that's what you think now, but just you wait. I reckon one of those handsome Northern girls will just naturally grab you before long."



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Philip looked bored.

"Anyhow," Joyce continued after a moment's silence, "I should think you'd be glad I'm engaged."

"Really? Why?"

"Because if I weren't I couldn't amuse you all day and go driving with you, could I?"

"I don't see why," Philip grumbled.

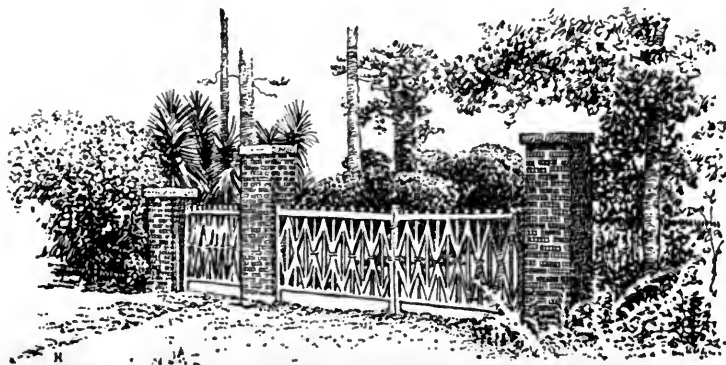
"You don't?" Joyce opened her eyes very wide. "Why, because you'd think I was trying to—to *get* you!"

"Nonsense!"

"Oh, yes, you would. Any man would. They're all very conceited. If a girl is a little bit nice to them they think she's setting her cap for them. That's why it's nice being engaged, you see. I can talk to you as much as I please and not be afraid of having you think things."

"I see," said Philip dryly. Then, "Supposing, though," he asked, "I should make love to you, Joyce."

"You wouldn't," she replied calmly, "because it wouldn't do any good, you see. Of course, I don't mind if you're *nice* to



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me; engaged girls always *flirt* a little, you know."

"Oh, do they! I'd always supposed girls gave up flirting when they became engaged. Perhaps it's different in the South."

Joyce nodded.

"I reckon it is. Southern girls have a right good time after they're engaged, Mr. Weld. You see the men understand and just try to be nice to them."

"Great Scott, don't they *ever* stop flirting, then?"

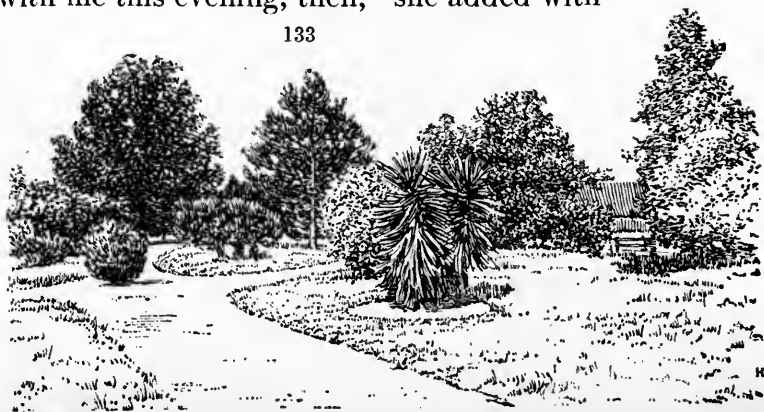
"Yes, after they're married. I reckon, Mr. Weld, that's where we're different from your Northern girls."

"Oh!" he murmured. "I guess there's something in that, too! So I am to be nice to you and flirt a little, am I, now that you're out of the game?"

"If you want to," she laughed. "Of course, if you don't——"

"Well, I don't," he said shortly.

"So I observe," said Joyce serenely. "You certainly aren't nice to me this morning. I reckon you don't care to go to Ridge with me this evening, then," she added with



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a pathetic droop of her mouth. Philip observed her severely.

"I shall be busy this afternoon. I'm going to get my things packed up."

"You're not going away!" cried Joyce.

"Yes. I'm perfectly able to travel and I've imposed on your hospitality long enough. I shall take the train North in the morning." He looked to see how she would take this announcement. She was turning the ring about on her finger while a little troubled frown clouded her face. There was silence for a moment. Then,

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "I just wish I hadn't told you!"

"Told me what?"

"Why, that I was engaged." She raised her face and looked at him accusingly. "You're just angry because I'm engaged and didn't tell you. Now, aren't you?"

"I'm not angry at all," replied Philip, slightly indignant. "Why should I be?"

"I don't see, either; but you are. Why can't you be nice to me if I *am* engaged, Mr. Weld? It wouldn't have made any difference to me if it had been *you*."



"I dare say not," he muttered. "And of course, it doesn't make any difference to me, only——"

"What?" she demanded, smiling again.

"Nothing—that is—well, I don't approve," he replied hypocritically, "of girls flirting after they're engaged."

"Not the tiniest little bit?" Joyce pleaded.

"No."

"Well, then," she said lightly, "we won't flirt. Anyhow, I don't think you do it very well."

"I haven't done it at all!" he protested.

"You haven't?" she exclaimed. "What do you call flirting, I'd like to know? You've paid me compliments and—and been nice to me, haven't you?"

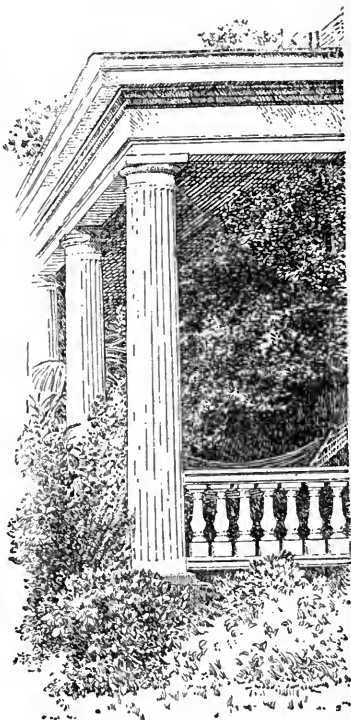
"I dare say," he laughed. "If you call that flirting I'll have to plead guilty, I guess."

"Well, what would you call flirting?" she asked curiously.

"Do you want me to—show you?"

Joyce met his gaze a moment and then dropped her eyes and shook her head slowly.

"No, I reckon you'd—better not," she said softly. After a moment she asked:



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"Are you really going to-morrow, Mr. Weld?"

"Don't you want me to?"

"No, of course I don't. It's going to be very lonesome when you go, Mr. Weld."

"I thought you agreed to call me Philip."

"You're cross with me," she said dolefully.

"Oh, hang it, I'm not! Not now, anyway. I don't believe any one could be cross with you long, Joyce."

"Don't you—Philip?" she asked demurely. "Why?"

"Because you're much too pretty and sweet and——"

Joyce laughed gayly.

"I thought you weren't going to!" she cried.

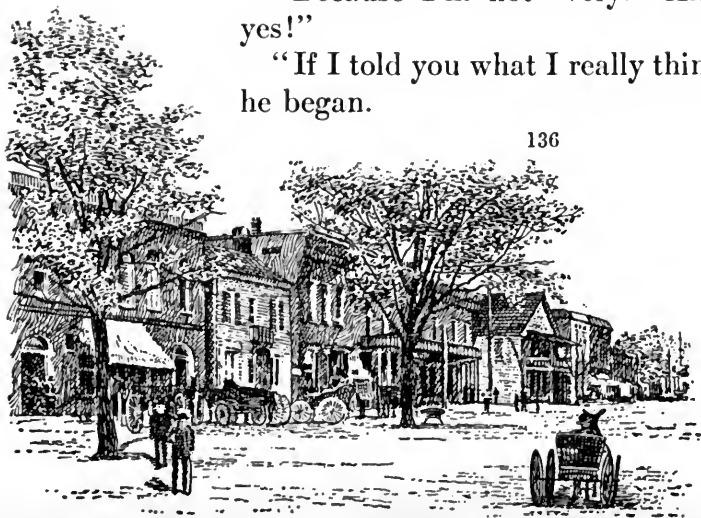
"I'm not. I'm just telling the truth," he protested, laughing with her.

"But you mustn't call me pretty," she said, suddenly serious.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not—very. Am I? Say yes!"

"If I told you what I really think of you," he began.



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"I'd be all blushes," she interrupted gayly. "But you're not going, are you?"

"Why not? There's—what's his name?—Tom to amuse you."

"Tom's so dreadfully far away," she sighed.

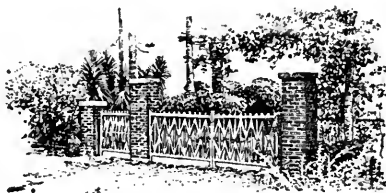
"And I'm here. Is that it?"

"Of course," answered Joyce tranquilly. Philip groaned.

"Joyce, I believe you're the worst kind of a coquette there is, a coquette who doesn't know she is one!"

Joyce smiled inscrutably.

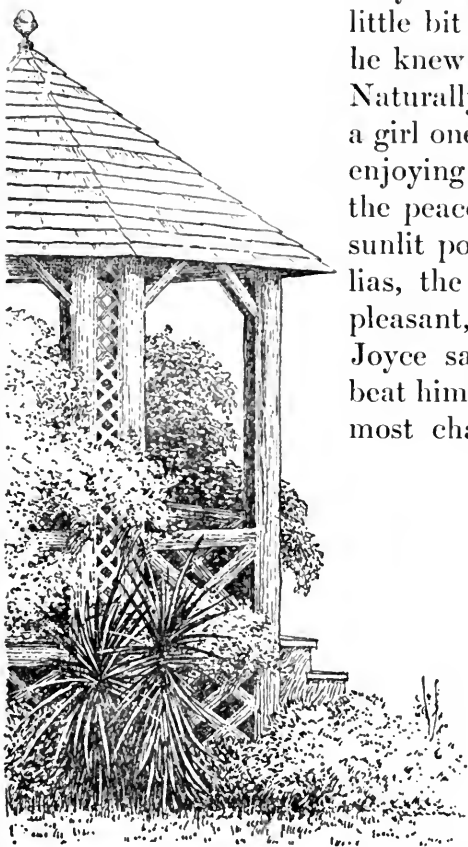
"Anyhow," she persisted, "you're not going, are you?"



XII.

HE didn't.

After all, he asked himself, why should he? It was evident that both Doctor Mayberry and Joyce wanted him to stay. And, besides, he still felt twinges of the confounded rheumatism. As for the fact of Joyce's engagement, why, it didn't concern him a bit. He wasn't in love with the girl; not really, that is! He had to confess ruefully, however, that he had begun to get a little bit fond of her. Of course, now that he knew she was engaged he would stop it. Naturally one didn't lose one's head over a girl one couldn't have! And he was really enjoying himself at Mayberry. He liked the peaceful, lazy, untroubled hours on the sunlit porch or in the shade of the magnolias, the long, sleepy, tranquil nights, the pleasant, jolly evenings in the library when Joyce sang to them and the Old Doctor beat him hands down at bezique in quite the most charming, apologetic manner in the





JOYCE

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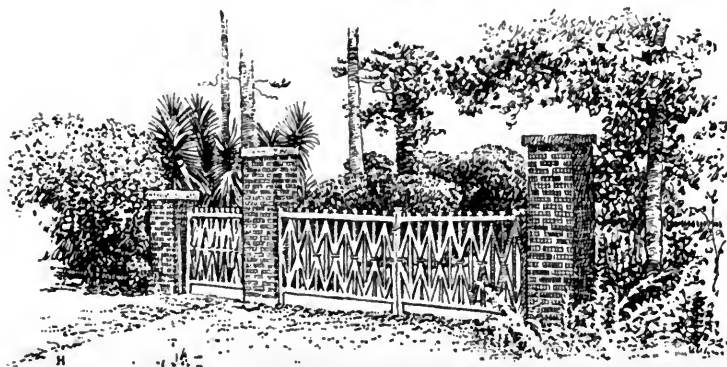
world. And he was fond of his host. He couldn't remember when he had known a man who so nearly met his standard of a gentleman; who gave so real and human a meaning to the word Christian. Philip realized that the Old Doctor was a result of tradition and environment; that, transplanted to the Northern stage and forced into the tragedy of struggle, he would prove, to use a theatrical term, not practical; but that made him none the less charming and lovable.

Philip's weekly letters from his mother and the more infrequent ones from friends told of gay doings at home. But viewed from the nerveless tranquillity of Mayberry the gayety had a feverish quality that held no temptation for him. The short and brilliant season that intervenes between the homeward rush from the South and the shoreward rush to the resorts was at its height, but none of the gorgeous events graphically portrayed in his mother's letters interested him half so much as the momentous happenings in and about the big white house set in the South Carolina cotton-fields.



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They would make dry reading at home were he to chronicle them in his letters, to be sure. He mentally pictured his mother's willing but unsuccessful effort to see the humor in the occasion of Aunt Emma's sudden conversion to religion, when there was no breakfast because she was too busy singing gospel hymns on the kitchen porch. At Mayberry it was something to laugh about for days and days. Nor, he fancied, would his mother find much interest in the fact that, as Joyce put it, "Ajax done 'nouncee his 'gagement to Marse Hooper's Minerva Jane." At Mayberry this, together with the highly diverting, proud and embarrassed demeanor of the prospective groom, was subject for table-talk at many meals. A sense of humor was not one of Mrs. Weld's attributes. Philip recalled persuading her to read a novel which had given him the deepest delight. It was Snaith's "Araminta." His mother had struggled conscientiously through twelve chapters, but then—"My dear Phil," she lamented, "I can't understand how you can call this amusing. The girl is the silliest thing I've

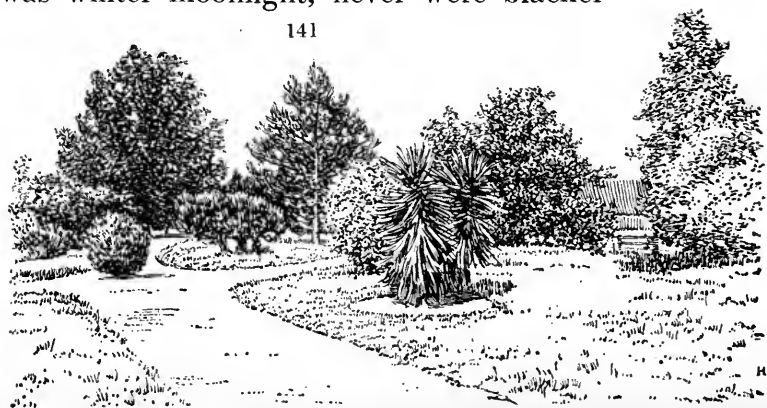


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ever heard of!" No, Mayberry happenings wouldn't prove of interest at home.

There was only one fly in the ointment of Philip's perfect content, and that was scarcely more than a midge, after all. Golf was still impossible. He sighed at the thought of his clubs rusting in their locker, for the whole month of good golfing weather that had slipped away, for the perfect score that was still to be made. But his sighs were not deep. Even these things didn't greatly disturb him.

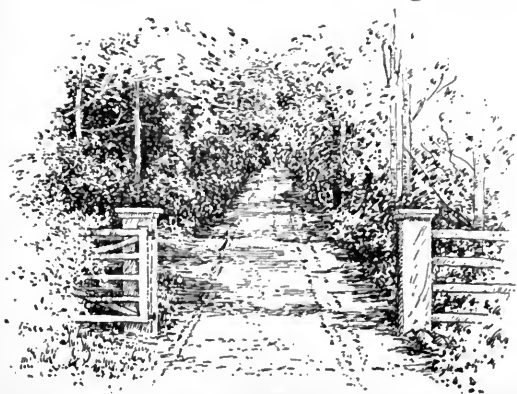
The evenings had begun to lose their chill. Warm, sunny afternoons melted into warm purple twilights, fragrant with the sweetly pungent smoke from pitch-pine fires that arose like straight, unwavering columns of incense from every chimney. Twilights deepened to dark, and then, behind the sombre forest wall, light grew and broadened and a great round moon sailed up into the blue-black sky, flooding the world with so intense a radiance that in the garden every leaf stood out in clear-cut detail and one could trace the very veins in them. Never was whiter moonlight, never were blacker



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shadows. The sandy stretches of road looked like snow. It was as though nature had been done over in silver and ink.

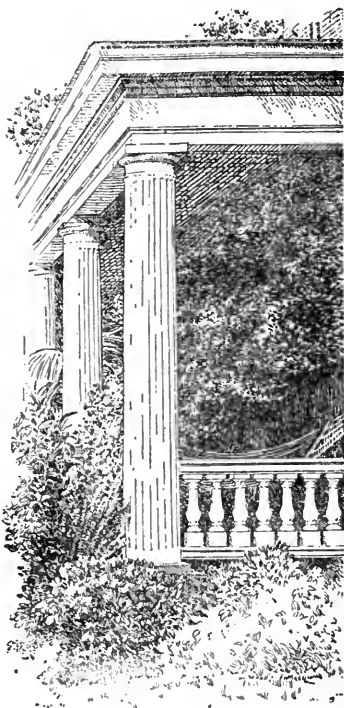
I think we are all a little mad under the moon. Even you, Deeply Respected Reader, doubtless have the memory of some occasion when, in spite of the self-control upon which you pride yourself, you felt the influence of the orb and said or did things for the saying or doing of which you were later quite unable to account. It was the moon that was at fault, the mad moon that turns burglars into poets, greybeards into lovers, and makes sentimentalists of us all. It is a mad world, my masters, and maddest of all when that arch humorist, the moon, muddles our senses with his subtle silver wine. And for down-right mischief and trouble-brewing commend me your Southern moon. Astronomers may protest all they like, but it is nevertheless a fact that the Southern moon is larger and brighter than the Northern article. You may prove this for yourself. Compare the skimpy, weazeny moon that scampers across the New England sky with the glorified orb that floats leisurely and



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majestically athwart the Southern heavens. There's all the difference that exists between a butter-chip and dinner-plate; while as for light, why, the comparison that suggests itself is that of a candle to an arc-lamp! And there's another fact that astronomers either do not know or, knowing, refuse to acknowledge. Which is that in the South the moon is swung much nearer to earth, probably several billion miles. Any dorky will tell you that if you can only cut a pole that is long enough you can tickle the Man in the Moon right under the chin. And you know you could never do that in the North!

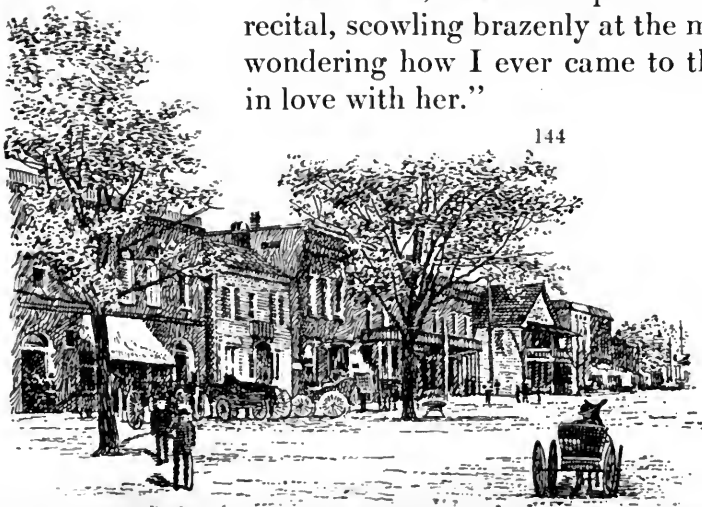
On one such night, almost a fortnight after his arrival at Mayberry, Philip went mad. Not dangerously mad, but sufficiently so to reveal to a sympathetic audience the story of his lost love and shattered life. The sympathetic audience was Joyce, Joyce in white with the magic radiance on her face and her dark eyes eloquently aiding and abetting the mischievous moon. The Old Doctor had whisked away behind Sanford on a six-mile journey with a broken leg at



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the end of it, and Philip and Joyce had gravitated naturally to the wide front porch. Joyce was in the hammock and Philip had drawn a wicker chair perilously close. 'Take a man and a girl, turn the moonlight on them full, and the result will invariably be a Discourse on Love. They may start off with Woman Suffrage, The Beauty of Nature, Missionary Work in South Africa, Theodore Roosevelt, The Cost of Living, what you will, but sooner or later they are talking of Love. I don't pretend to be able to explain it. It's part of the spell. It took Philip and Joyce just twelve minutes to reach it, by way of Ajax's engagement, Joyce's engagement, and engagements in general. And then, really before he knew it, Philip was confessing all! And Joyce listened, gently, soothingly sympathetic, and egged him on to the most intimate revelations; and never once hinted that it was not all quite unknown to her.

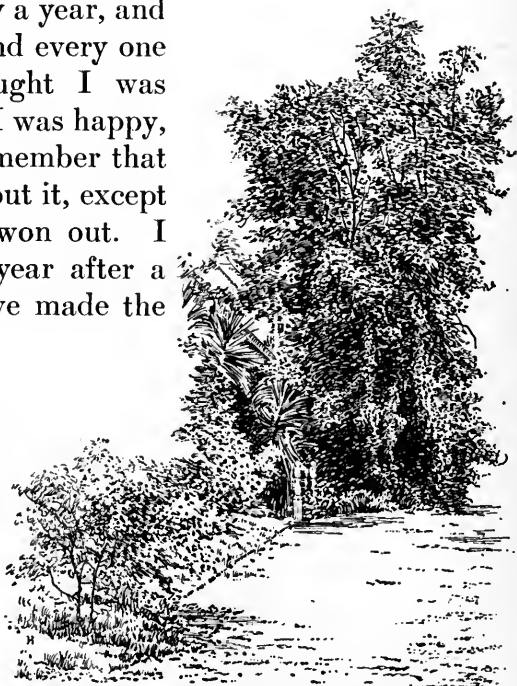
"And now," said Philip at the end of his recital, scowling brazenly at the moon, "I'm wondering how I ever came to think I was in love with her."



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"Oh, but I reckon you really did love her," answered Joyce softly from the hammock. "Only when she treated you like that she killed your love."

"But I didn't. That's the funny part of it. She was perfectly stunning to look at; one of the Junoesque sort, you know; and lots of fellows were after her. I dare say some of them wanted her money; her family is pretty well fixed. In a way it was rather the correct thing last year to be in love with Myra Warren. Most of the fellows you knew were, you see. I guess that's the reason I took a hand myself; didn't want to feel out of things. Why she accepted me instead of any of the other chaps I'm blessed if I know! But she did finally, after keeping the field tagging along for nearly a year, and I was terribly set-up about it and every one congratulated me and I thought I was pretty near all right. Thought I was happy, too, I suppose. But I can't remember that there was any especial thrill about it, except that I was pleased at having won out. I was a whole lot happier one year after a Harvard football game when we made the

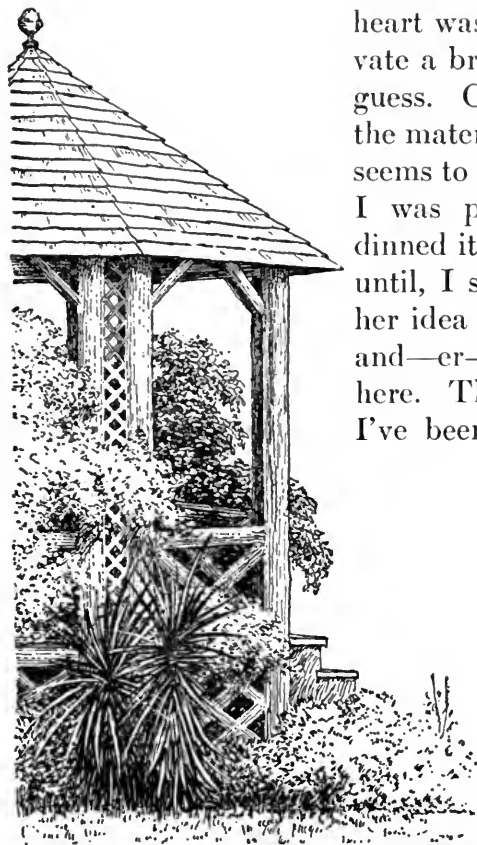


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only score in the last five minutes of the second half!"

"I reckon you can be in love with a person and not realize it until something happens," said Joyce vaguely.

"You mean that I was in love with Miss Warren and didn't know it? No, I wasn't." He shook his head with decision. "I never was in love with her. I can see that now. Although when she threw me over I felt pretty bad, I confess. But it was just my pride, I fancy, that got a jolt. And then it was sort of a surprise, too. I'd always understood that when a girl jilted you your heart was broken. So I proceeded to cultivate a broken heart. I was an awful ass, I guess. Come to think of it, I believe it was the mater that was mainly responsible. She seems to have jumped to the conclusion that I was pretty badly hurt. Anyway, she dinned it into me morning, noon, and night, until, I suppose, I thought so too. It was her idea that I should go away somewhere and—er—get over it. That's why I came here. There's a chap named Simmons that I've been laying for for about two years.



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I've never had a chance at him and I knew that he would be here and thought I'd get a game with him. And then the course here is about as good as any in the South. I didn't get my game, though," he added regretfully. "The day before we were to have played that infernal grippe got me."

"What a shame!" murmured Joyce sympathetically. "You were right sick, too, weren't you?"

"Well, it seemed so to me, but I've never been sick before to speak of, and perhaps I'm not a good judge. Anyhow, I was so busy being miserable with grippe that I forgot to be heart-broken!"

"I'm afraid," said Joyce sadly, "you're a very fickle lover."

"I was beginning to think," answered Philip with an amused chuckle, "that something was wrong with me, that I was incapable of being really in love."

"I think that would be awful," said Joyce thoughtfully.

"Oh, I don't know; I might be a whole lot better off. Lovers don't seem to be always happy folks, do they?"



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"N—no, but it seems to me," said Joyce softly, "that the unhappiness that comes from being really and truly in love with somebody must be very sweet."

Philip considered a moment.

"Would it?" he asked doubtfully. "Look here, Joyce, you're not—not unhappy, surely?"

"I? Why, no indeed!"

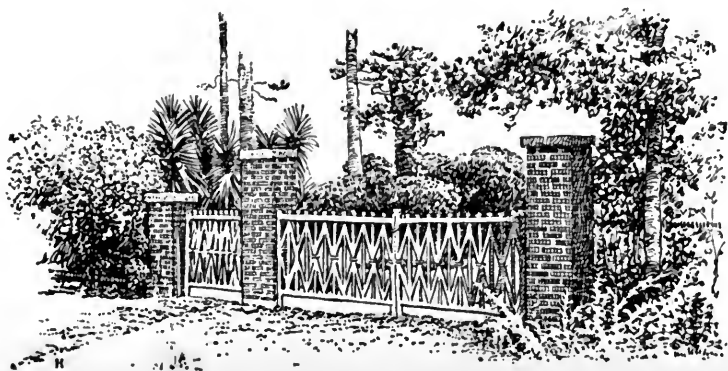
"Well," he explained apologetically, "sometimes you have a serious, far-away look, you know. And then, you don't hear from that chap very often, either."

"Tom never was much of a letter-writer," said Joyce.

"Piffle! What has that to do with it? If I was engaged to a girl like you and I couldn't make my letters I'd learn how mighty quick, I can tell you! I don't see how you can either of you get along without writing."

"He is right busy, I reckon," Joyce defended, "and there isn't much for me to write about, is there?"

"Much to write about? Why, hang it, you don't put *news* in a love-letter, Joyce! You—you——"



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"What?" she asked, smiling across at him in the moonlight.

"You just rave, of course!"

"Is that what you did, Philip?"

"Oh, me! I guess I never wrote a real love-letter. But I'll bet I could—to you!"

"*Merci!*" laughed Joyce. "You ought to be engaged, then. Think what some girl is missing!"

"Oh, you may laugh, but I'll bet you'd be happier if that Tom fellow wrote you love-letters a little more often, Joyce."

"Would I?" she mused. "Maybe it would be nice to get a love-letter from—the right one."

"Hasn't he ever written you one?" asked Philip.

"Not the kind you talk about, I reckon."

"Then what's the matter with him? He doesn't deserve to have you. I'll bet he's a conceited ass. I beg your pardon! I didn't mean that, Joyce. But, confound it, he isn't good enough for you; that's certain!"

"Oh, yes, he is, quite," replied Joyce decisively. "After all, I reckon it's silly to write love-letters."



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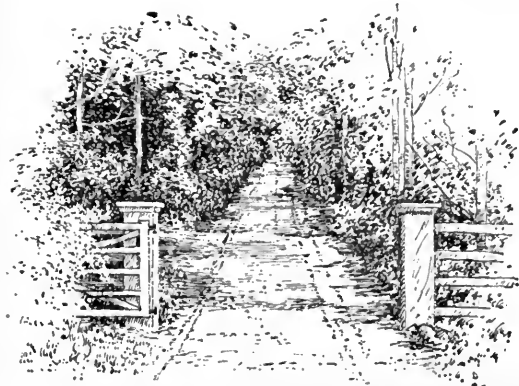
"Silly! Then I'd be silly if I was the chap you loved, Joyce! Why, I'd have to, don't you see? If I was away from you that would be the only thing to keep me going." He leaned toward her and dropped his voice. "I'd just have to tell you that I loved you and missed you every minute, and that I was just living to get back to you again; that I was hungry for sight of you, for the sound of your voice, for the touch of your hand." He laid his hand for an instant on the little fingers clutching the hammock's edge. "Why, I'd have to use whole pages trying to tell you how sweet and lovely you are! Would that be silly, Joyce? Wouldn't you care——"

He stopped suddenly and drew back.

"If—I was Tom," he added lamely. There was a moment of silence. Joyce was gazing past him into the moonlight-flooded garden with slightly-parted lips. Presently she sighed deliciously.

"Why, that," she said, "would be almost like having you—like having Tom here, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, hang Tom!" he muttered.



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Joyce laughed softly and turned to him with merry eyes.

"I thought you weren't going to be—nice to me, Philip. You do it beautifully and I take back what I said the other day."

"You needn't," he replied morosely. "You said I didn't flirt very well, and I'm not sure that I do."

"Oh, yes, you do, really!"

He got up and walked to the edge of the porch and stood there with his back toward her.

"Because," he said, "I'm not sure that I've been flirting, Joyce."

There was no reply. Then he heard her getting up from the hammock.

"You're not going yet?" he asked, turning.

"Yes, I reckon it's time, don't you?" she asked gravely. She threw him a little half-troubled smile as she turned toward the door. Philip followed.

"I reckon it is," he answered as gravely.

He sat for a long time at the open window after he was ready for bed, smoking, gazing out into the silver world, dreaming. And, although he didn't know it, at another open window upstairs somebody else sat and dreamed.



XIII.

"AND what's this?" asked Joyce.

"That?" Philip blew a cloud of smoke into the sunlit air, frowned and hesitated.

"That is a buttercup."

"Silly!" laughed Joyce.

"Well, it's yellow," he defended.

"You don't know a thing about flowers, do you?" she asked pityingly.

"Well, you see—er—I'm not used to them this way. Most of the flowers I know have their stems cut and grow in refrigerators."

"Perhaps you know what this is, Mr. Stupid?"

Philip flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his sleeve.

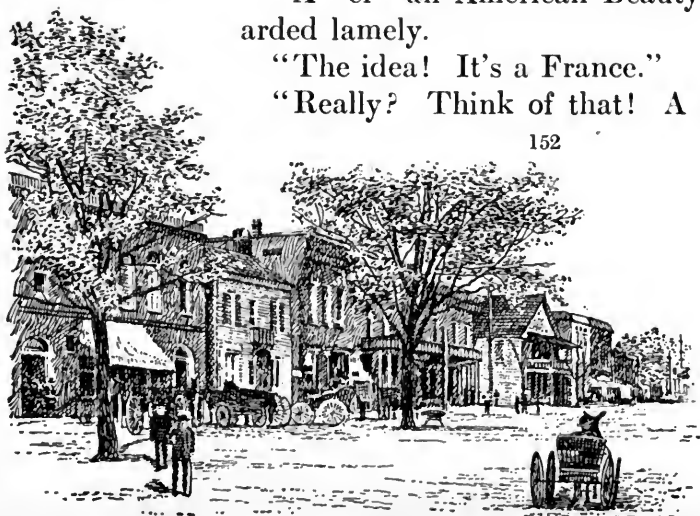
"That," he replied nonchalantly, "is a rose."

"But what kind of a rose?"

"A—er—an American Beauty," he hazarded lamely.

"The idea! It's a France."

"Really? Think of that! A mistake in



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nationality. And I suppose that one over there is a German rose."

"That's a Banksia," she answered. "Now what——"

"I refuse to display my ignorance any further," he protested. "It is much too warm, anyhow, for botany. I prefer to sit in the summer-house." He led the way there and Joyce followed after a moment's hesitation. Last night had left a little barrier of restraint between them.

"If you call this hot," said Joyce, seating herself at the other side of the little green-shadowed house, "you ought to come here in July some time."

"I will if you'll invite me," answered Philip promptly.

"You'd be sorry if you did, I reckon."

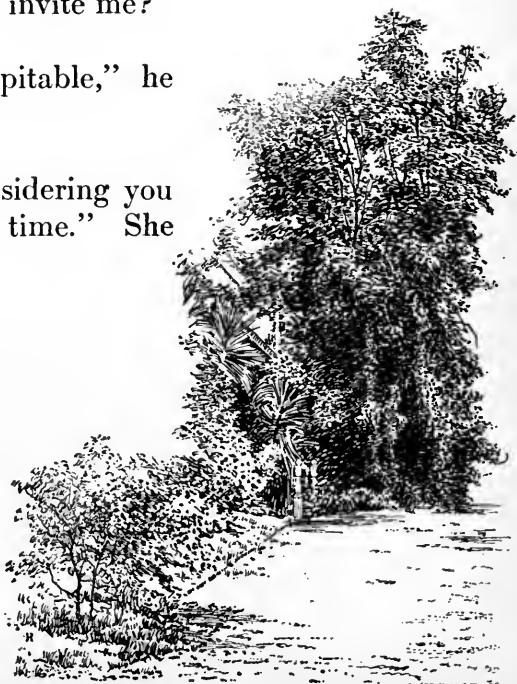
"That means that you won't invite me?"

She shook her head.

"That sounds rather inhospitable," he sighed.

"It's for your own good."

"If it's my good you're considering you shouldn't have invited me this time." She chose to ignore that.



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"You Northerners can't stand hot weather," she said.

"We can't? I guess you've never seen us sweltering around New York in August! Why, I'll bet you don't know what real hot weather is down here! Did you ever have to fill the bath-tub with cold water and get into it before you could go to sleep?"

"Goodness, no! Have you?"

"Rather!"

"Well, it's awfully hot here in the middle of the day," said Joyce, "but the nights——"

"Are always cool," interrupted Philip. "That's Number One on the Bromide List."

"It's true, though," she laughed.

"Of course. But consider how much more interesting to say, 'It's very cool here in the middle of the day, but it always heats up toward night.'"

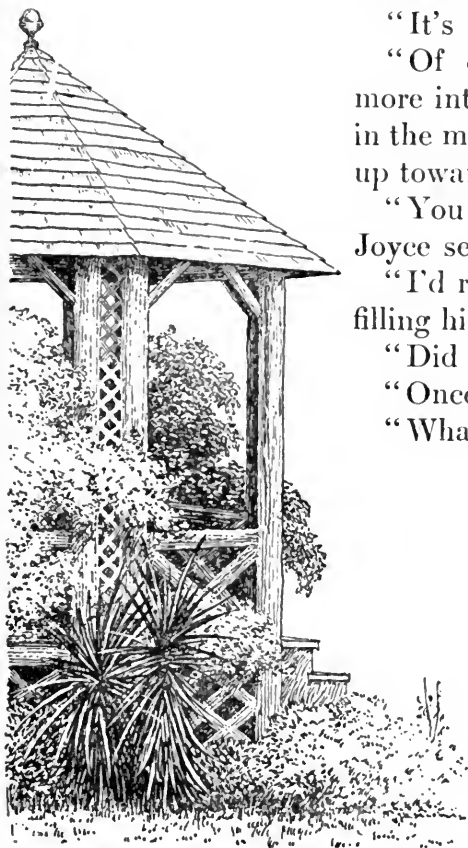
"You like to laugh, don't you?" asked Joyce seriously.

"I'd rather do it than cry," he answered, filling his pipe.

"Did you ever cry?"

"Once—no, twice, I think."

"What for?"



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"The first time I got a licking. That was my father. The other time—well, that was another licking. That was Harvard. She beat us at football."

"And you cried?" she asked incredulously.

"Yes. I guess we all did. We didn't actually blubber, but—well, our eyes got sort of leaky, you know. I suppose," he said reflectively, "it sounds funny to you, but then you've never lost a big game after you had it all doped out to win."

"No. And I reckon I've cried about things not half as bad," she confessed.

"I can't imagine you crying," he said as he lighted his pipe. "Any more than I could imagine that mocking-bird out there crying. What about?"

"Oh, just—just nothing, I reckon."

"I'll bet it's that Tom chap," he said darkly. "I suppose you quarrel like—like all other sweethearts."

Joyce shook her head, smiling.

"No, I've never really quarrelled with Tom," she said.

"Then he has quarrelled with you."



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"No, not really quarrelled. He was sort of—sort of provoked once when I——"

"What did you do?" he asked curiously.

"It was something I wouldn't do," she laughed. "I wouldn't promise to marry him."

"Oh!" He smoked a while in silence, during which time Joyce smiled secretly at her thoughts. Then, "I wish you'd tell me something," he said. "You needn't if you'd rather not, but—well, when is it going to be, Joyce?"

"It?"

"I mean when are you going to marry him? Is the—the date settled on?"

"Oh, no!"

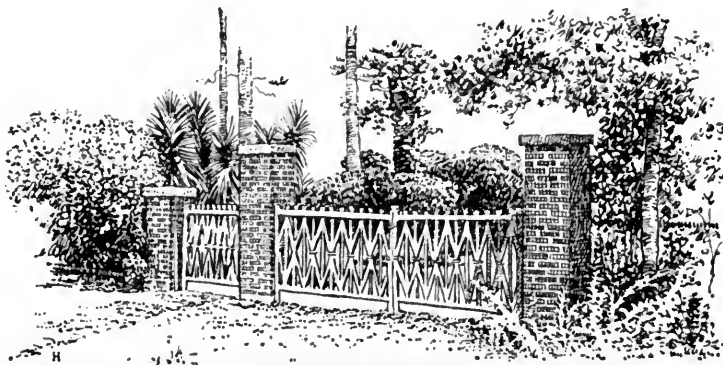
"Well," said Philip in surprise, "you sound as though I'd suggested a murder instead of a marriage. Look here, Joyce, I don't believe——" He stopped and studied the bowl of his pipe with sudden interest.

"You don't believe what?" she prompted.

"Nothing; that is—well, hang it, I don't believe you really care an awful lot. Do you?"

"About what?"

"About—him."



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"Him?" Joyce dropped her eyes, a little inscrutable smile hovering about her lips. Then she raised them again and looked across. "I care more for *him*," she said softly and gravely, "than for anything in the whole world, Philip."

"Oh." Philip hid his face behind a cloud of tobacco smoke. "I oughtn't have said that, I guess," he added in somewhat expressionless tones. "I'm sorry. He—he's a lucky beggar, Joyce."

There was no answer and he waved the smoke aside. She was smiling across at him, chin in hand, a strange little smile full of secret things.

"I suppose he doesn't half know it," he grumbled.

"I don't reckon he does," said Joyce demurely.

Philip gazed miserably into the brown eyes for a moment. Then he jumped to his feet.

"Oh, hang it!" he muttered.

He thrust his hands into his pockets and strode out of the summer-house and along the path toward the house. And Joyce, still smiling, watched him disappear behind the roses.



XIV.

NATURE is unlike History inasmuch as she can repeat herself, and sometimes does. She did it the next night. There was the same big, lazy Southern moon overhead, the same silver radiance frosting the world, the same black, black shadows; and on the porch sat the same man and the same girl. The Old Doctor had not returned for supper. A telephone message had warned them not to expect him until late. Now and then Joyce's gaze wandered away across the corner of the field beyond which, for a space, the road was visible in the moonlight. Conversation lagged to-night. It had been so all day, and at supper, while each had striven desperately enough at times, there had been long moments of silence. It had been a relief to each to get away from the table and come out here on the porch where the brooding stillness of the night seemed rather to forbid talk than demand it. They had spoken fitfully of the Doctor's coming, had dis-



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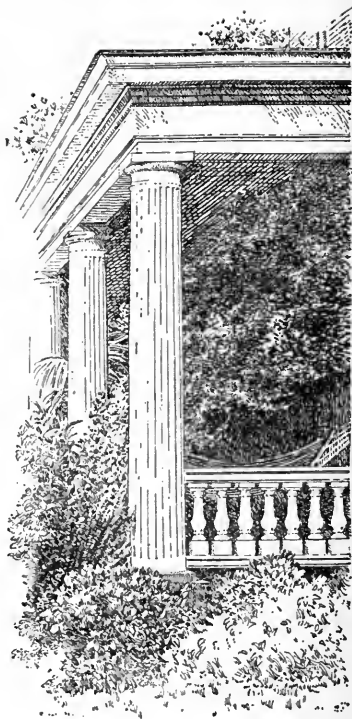
cussed the little events of the day, and now they were silent again. Almost the width of the porch separated them, and Joyce had chosen a chair to-night instead of the hammock and sat in it very straightly, her face in shadow. Philip was restless. Half a dozen times he had refilled and relighted his pipe, and as many times had leaned to the edge of the porch and tapped the contents out. From miles away toward the Gap came the faint, shrill whistle of a locomotive.

"Oh!" said Joyce in a little nervous, protesting voice.

"What?" Philip tried to see her face, but it was only a dim blur in the shadow.

"Sometimes I just can't stand the whistle of the trains," answered Joyce. "It makes me want to go somewhere—anywhere! Haven't you ever felt that way? As though you just had to turn your back on all the things you know and live with and hurry off to new places and new people and new ways? I feel like that to-night. I'd like to be on that train, going—oh, anywhere!"

"I fancy it's a freight," said Philip. But



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he didn't laugh, nor did Joyce. Somehow laughter had been strangely missing to-day.

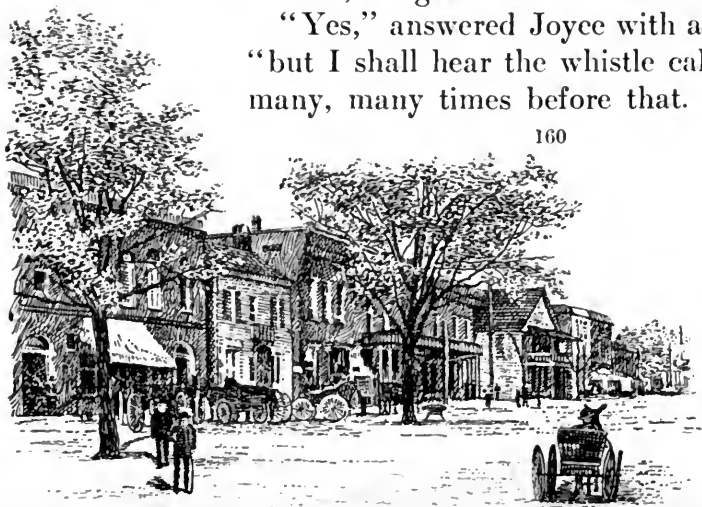
"I wouldn't care," she answered. "It's going somewhere."

"I'm very comfortable where I am," observed Philip.

"I reckon you don't know the feeling," mused Joyce. "You've travelled. I never have. I've never been away from here since I came, except to go to Augusta or Athens. Once, when I was a little girl, we went to Richmond and Washington and Norfolk, but I've almost forgotten what they were like now. I suppose it's horrid to be dissatisfied, for Uncle Cass is as good as gold to me; my own father was never kinder; only—only I would like to see something else than this. Does that sound ungrateful to you?"

"No. It seems natural enough. When you are married your chance will come, I suppose; Washington, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Niagara Falls! Think of that!"

"Yes," answered Joyce with a deep sigh, "but I shall hear the whistle calling to me many, many times before that. I hate to



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wait, Philip; I always have all my life. If I've wanted a thing I've wanted it at once, and if I couldn't have it then, when it did come I'd stopped caring."

"The impatience of youth," murmured Philip.

"Yes. I reckon when you get older it doesn't matter so much; you learn to be patient and wait."

"Or to go without," he added dryly.

"Yes, or to go without," she echoed with falling voice.

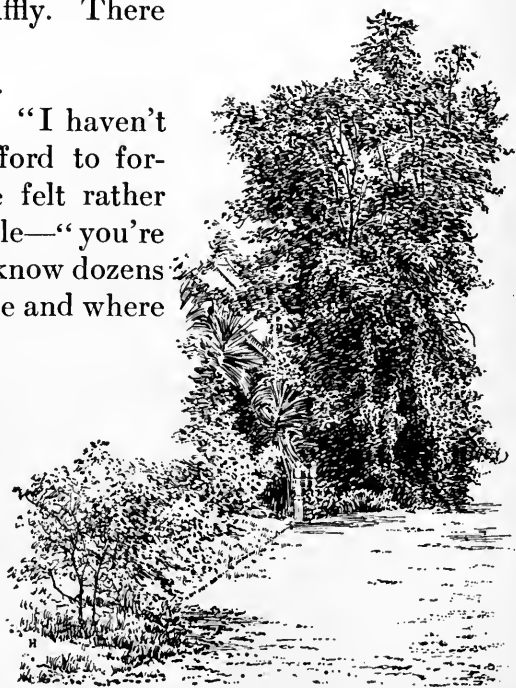
They were silent again. Presently,

"I reckon you'll be travelling again before long," she said. "I shall sit here and envy you."

"You'll forget me as soon as I'm out of sight of Mayberry," he said gruffly. There was no reply.

"Won't you?" he demanded.

"No," she answered evenly. "I haven't so many friends that I can afford to forget even one. But you—" he felt rather than saw the little wistful smile—"you're going back up there where you know dozens and dozens and dozens of people and where



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all sorts of nice things are happening all the time. I wonder how long you'll remember Mayberry Plantation and its humdrum occupants."

"I wish to Heaven I could forget them!" he said savagely.

"Are we—as bad as that?" she asked with a little laugh.

"You're—as hard to forget as that."

"If you don't want to remember us," she said lightly, "then I hope you'll forget us."

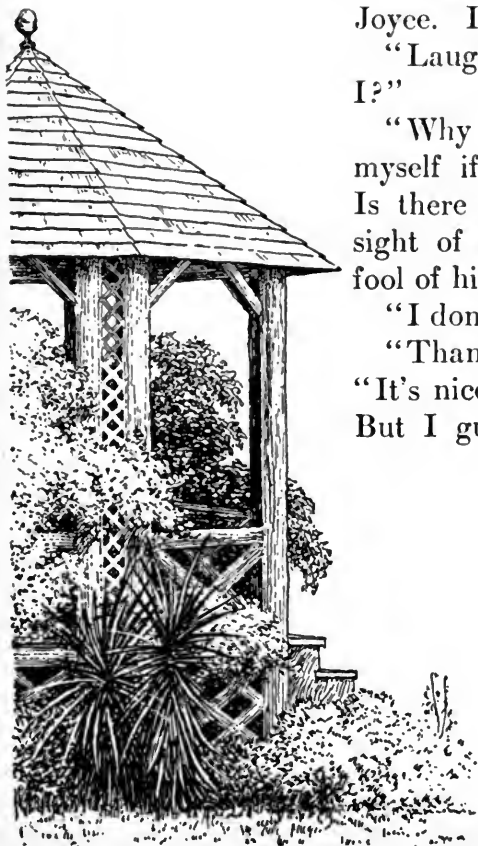
"I shan't," muttered Philip miserably. "And perhaps, after a while, I shan't want to. I wonder if you're laughing at me, Joyce. I can't see your face, you know."

"Laughing at you? Why, no; why should I?"

"Why shouldn't you? I could laugh at myself if I weren't so blamed miserable. Is there anything much funnier than the sight of a fairly rational being making a fool of himself?"

"I don't understand——"

"Thanks for saying so," he interrupted. "It's nice of you to help me save my face. But I guess you do understand, just the



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same. Well—" he lighted a match and held the faint yellow flame to his pipe—"I suppose I'm not the first one." He tossed the glowing splinter over the porch and blew long wreaths of smoke into the moonlight. "I guess I'd better clear out of here," he muttered.

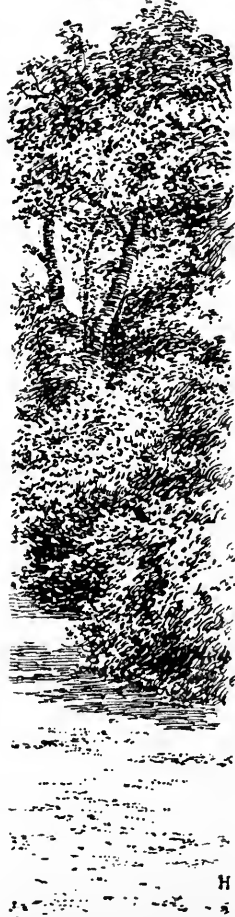
"We shall be sorry to have you go," said Joyce faintly.

"Yes, I'm distinctly amusing, I fancy," he grunted over his pipe-stem. "Look here, I can't sit still any longer. I want to move. I—I've got nerves, I guess. Shall we walk down the lane? Perhaps we can see the Doctor."

"Very well," she answered, rising. He looked at her doubtfully as she came into the light.

"Will you be warm enough?" he asked anxiously. "Oughtn't you to have something over your shoulders?"

"No, I'm quite warm, thanks. I'm afraid Uncle will be just naturally starved to death by the time he gets back." She walked down the steps and Philip followed. The lane was a funnel of gloom barred and



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flecked with moonlight. They walked slowly and in silence. Now and then a bird stirred or peeped sleepily amidst the branches of the oaks. For the rest it was all silence, soft, mellow, jasmine-fragrant silence. Not a leaf trembled and the air was like warm velvet against their faces. They went side by side down the sandy road, yet kept always a little space between them. Only once they broke the charmed silence. Then Joyce said, "He is very late to-night," and Philip answered, "Yes." And presently they were at the end of the lane and the country road lay before them, straight and bare in the moonlight.

"Shall we walk on?" he asked.

"No, let's wait here a little while," said Joyce. The old gate, no longer in use, was pushed back against the fence and vines clambered over it. Joyce put one foot on the lower rail and swung herself up to a seat on the post.

"I used to sit here by the hour and dream day-dreams and wait for Uncle Cass," she said. "Then I'd climb into the buggy and ride up to the house with him. That was



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only three years ago, I reckon, but it seems much longer."

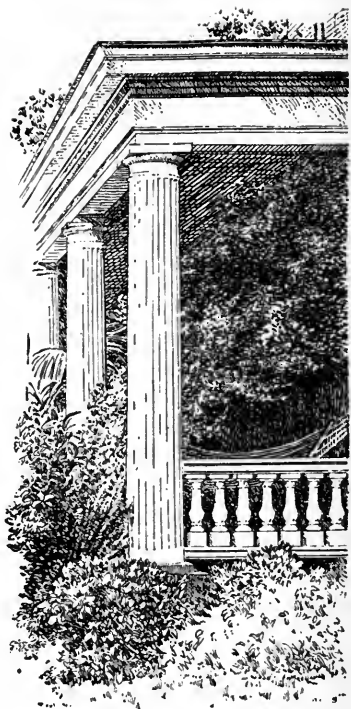
Philip leaned against the gate beside her. They were in the full white radiance of the big moon. It played strange tricks with her eyes and wove silver filaments into her brown hair; and her mouth was like a scarlet poppy. She reached out beside her and tugged at a spray.

"See," she said, "a jasmine blossom. How late they are this spring!" She held it down before his face. "Is there anything sweeter than the fragrance of jasmine?"

"Yes," he whispered, looking up into her face, "you, Joyce."

"Am I? Sweeter than jasmine. Do you think so?" She drew the spray lightly across his lips, smiling down at him. He caught the hand with both of his, crushing the fragrant blossom it held, and pressed his lips to it. The odor of bruised flower and of soft white hand mingled in a heady perfume that set his senses reeling.

"Joyce! Joyce!" he whispered hoarsely, pressing kisses against the little unresisting hand. "What am I going to do?"



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When he raised his eyes she was smiling down at him tremulously, gravely, kindly.

"What have I done, Joyce?" he asked miserably.

"You've crushed my jasmine," she whispered in a trembling sigh.

He looked down. And at the moment a moonbeam entangled itself in the little diamond on her finger and sparkled up at him dazzlingly. He groaned and dropped her hand.

"I am forgetting," he muttered.

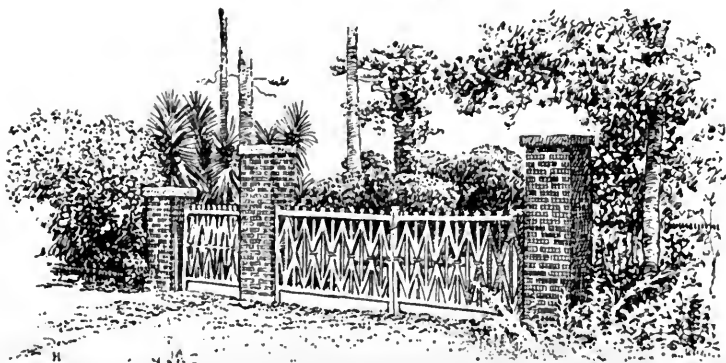
For a moment he stood in silence. Then he drew away.

"Come," he said coldly. "Let us go back."

He made no attempt to help her from the gate and she slid down obediently and fell into place beside him. The lane looked very black and dismal to Philip. Neither spoke until they had reached the steps again. Then said Joyce with something that was half a sigh and half a laugh:

"We forgot Uncle Cass, didn't we?"

"Yes," he replied sombrely. They climbed the steps together and paused as



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though by consent at the hall door. It was fairly dark there, but Joyce could see the troubled look on his face. His eyes avoided her.

"I think I will go to bed," she said.

"Yes," he answered again.

"Good-night." Of late they had formed the habit of shaking hands at bedtime, and now she held her hand out to him, but he wouldn't see it.

"Good-night," he said dully.

Neither moved.

"Good-night," she repeated. There was a wistful tone in her voice that stirred his heart. He caught her hand.

"Good-night, Joyce," he whispered. "I'm—sorry."

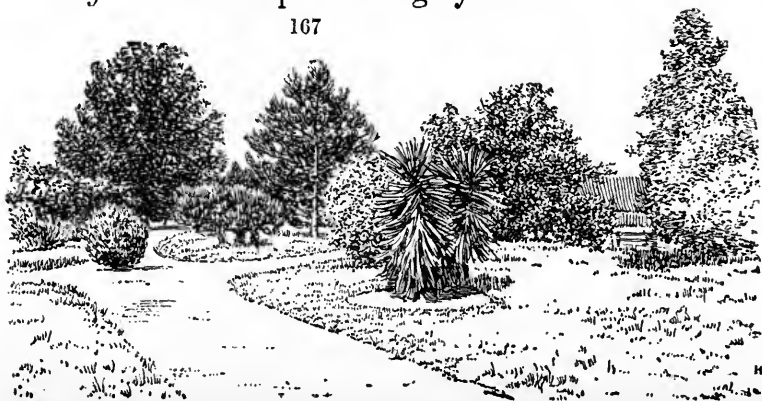
"You're not angry with me then?" she asked.

"Angry! I angry? It's you who should be that, Joyce!"

"Should I? I'm not, Philip."

He looked at her then; found her eyes in the silver twilight and held them until the lids dropped slowly over them.

"Joyce!" he whispered roughly.



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Then his arms were about her and she was close to him, and he was whispering "Joyce! Joyce!" over and over. He sought her lips, but those she wouldn't yield him, and his kisses fell on a warm, smooth cheek. For a long moment she lay there unresisting in his arms. Then she strove gently to break his clasp.

"Please, oh, *please!*" she begged softly.

His arms released her slowly and she backed away from him. For an instant she raised her eyes and looked at him troubledly, happily. Then she turned and ran. . . .

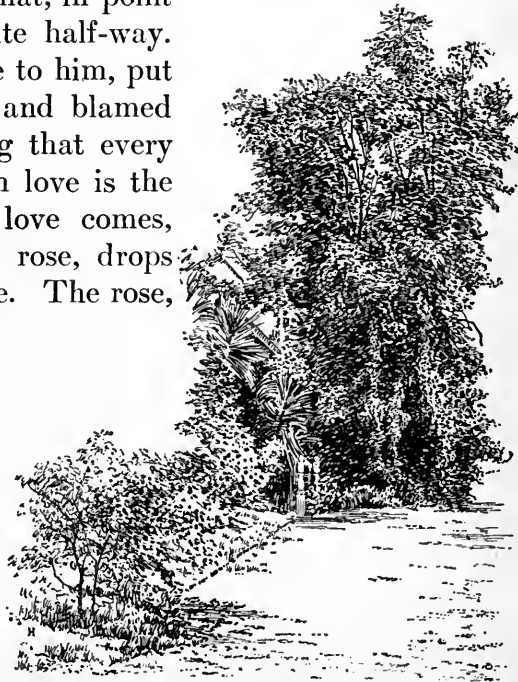
Upstairs a door closed sharply.

On the porch Philip, senses and thoughts in a sad, delicious muddle, gazed unseeingly at the mischievous moon.



XV.

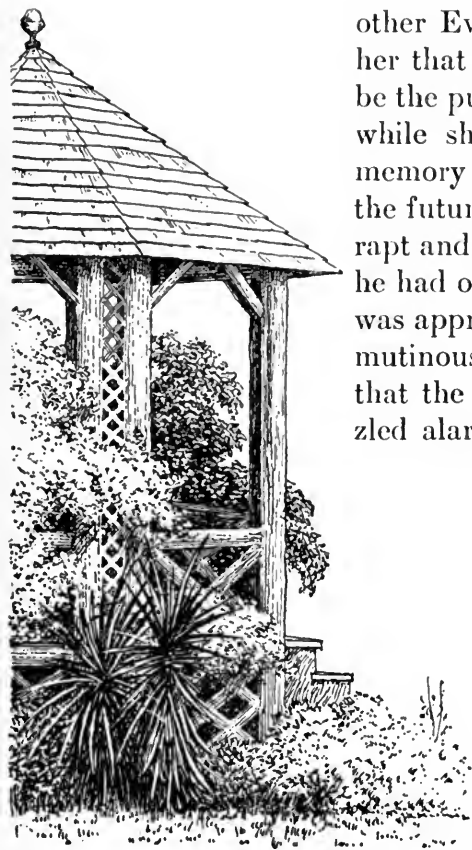
Philip awoke the next morning with a mental bad taste. That he had acted like a villain and a fool he was convinced. The broad, glaring sunlight told him so emphatically, distinctly. He groaned and searched his memory for some mitigating excuse with which to ease his conscience, but found none. He had deliberately acted like a cad, he told himself. He had never learned to hold women lightly nor think lightly of love, and it seemed to him this morning that he had stained Joyce with every kiss he had taken. Another man might have reminded himself cynically that Joyce had not appeared especially offended; that, in point of fact, she had met him quite half-way. But Philip, if the thought came to him, put it down to Joyce's innocence and blamed himself the more, not realizing that every woman is a new Eve to whom love is the apple of knowledge. When love comes, innocence, like the calyx of a rose, drops away, having served its purpose. The rose,



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as pure as ever, unfolding her petals, needs the calyx no longer. She is happy in the light, which is Love, and the sun, which is Knowledge wonderful and glorious.

To Joyce, aware of the innocent deception of the engagement ring, last night's events brought no remorse; only a great, enfolding joy, a happiness that set her heart singing and her pulses dancing. That Philip, still believing her engaged to Cousin Tom, would accuse himself she quite understood. And presently she would undeceive him and take him into her own happiness, but not yet. The inherent wisdom of all other Eves was hers, a wisdom which told her that sweet as the final surrender would be the pursuit was sweeter still. And meanwhile she wanted nothing more than the memory of last night and her thoughts of the future. At breakfast she was silent and rapt and sweetly serious, and Philip thought he had offended beyond her forgiveness and was appropriately miserable one minute and mutinous the next, and altogether so strange that the Old Doctor viewed him with puzzled alarm.



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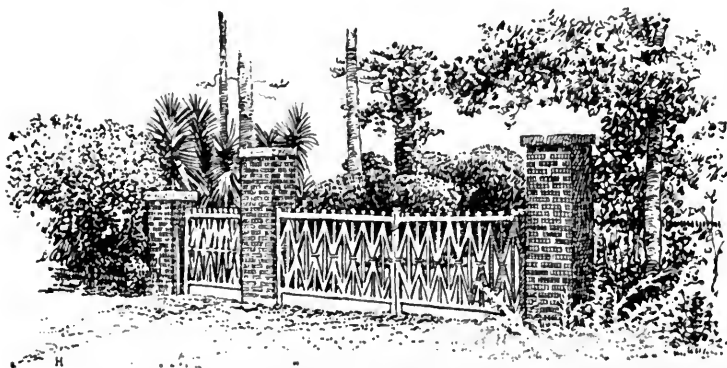
When, at half-past nine, Joyce jogged off with her uncle to Ridge, Philip was certain that his sin was as scarlet and that Joyce held him beyond pardon. He decided that the only thing left for him to do in decency was to pack up and get out. But that wasn't so easy, for he knew now that he loved Joyce with every beat of his heart and every breath of his body. A little more conceit would have made his lot easier, since then it might have occurred to him that the object of his affection could conceivably care for him; in which case a severed engagement now would be far more sensible than a lifetime of unhappiness. But Philip was very much in love and placed his lady very high and took himself very humbly.

He tried to read on the porch, but found he could only think and think. And after a while he tossed his book aside and went into the garden and paced around there in the warm sunlight. A bird was singing lazily in the chinaberry tree, like a sulky cantatrice complying under protest with the terms of her contract. The languorous air was heavy with the scent of flowers, of



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sun-bathed soil, and of ripening verdure. Nature was hard at work. Here in one small quadrangle of her great laboratory she was performing feats of alchemy that made the vaunted triumphs of science seem in comparison no more than the clumsy tricks of a child. Cells were building every moment, branches lengthening, tiny leaves uncurling, buds bursting from their sheaths. The Bank-sia's eager roots pushed here and there in the warm loam, found and devoured and pumped sap up through the long branches; and tiny green leaves were born almost in an hour and every sunset saw another hand's breadth conquered by the reaching trailers. The banana-trees, running over with sap, performed miracles every day. Long, fresh, green leaves, curled lengthwise like rolls of ancient parchment, unfolded to the sun and shone as though varnished. On the sturdy rose-bushes yesterday's infant bud was to-day a full-bloom lady, nodding and smiling and baring a golden bosom to the lover bee. Beside the summer-house the paths were sprinkled with the purple petals of the wistaria. A pomegranate was in bud and

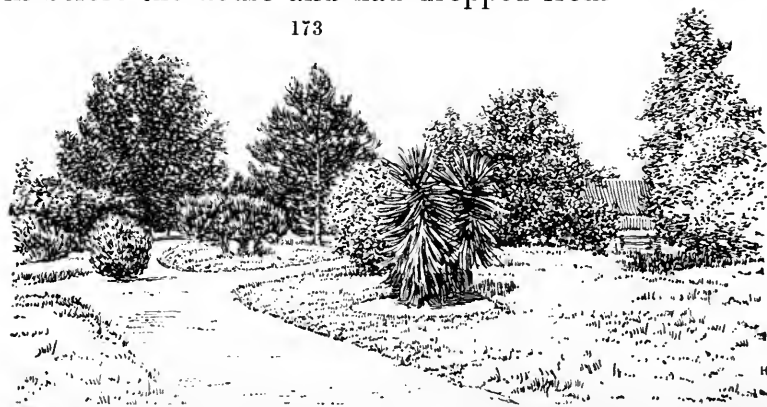


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soon would be lighted by a hundred red wax candles. A fig-tree shook its young leaves in the tiny breeze and spread grotesque branches of velvety purple-brown. The oleanders along the fence stood straight and soldierly and opened pink and white blossoms along stiff branches. And in the midst of all this beauty and marvel, perfume and wonder, Philip strode up and down along the petal-strewn paths and was quite as dejected and down-hearted, perplexed and undecided as any lover since loving came into fashion!

Go away he must, and yet going was like tearing his heart out. Under the edge of the magnolia-tree he was all for staying and squeezing comfort from unhappiness. Passing the summer-house he determined to leave at once; that afternoon! Turning from the arching branches of the big, pink Duchess rose he could neither go nor stay, and life was a sad and sorry muddle. And into the muddle, at the next moment, came a man on horseback.

Philip didn't hear him until he had reined in before the house and had dropped from



the saddle. He was a tall youth of twenty-three or four, dark, wide-hipped, straight-backed. Philip observed him over the tops of the shrubs; saw him tie the horse and mount the steps in the manner of a visitor certain of his welcome. Had Philip been a student of the law of coincidence he would have guessed the man's identity, but he didn't. In fact he gave him little thought. His own problems were sufficient this morning. But when, a quarter of an hour later, he returned to the porch and found the visitor seated there, idly slapping his gaiters with his whip, curiosity stirred. After a moment of indecision he approached.

"Good-morning," he said. "I suppose you want to see the Doctor." The youth, who had watched his approach with patent interest, arose politely and replied with a pronounced Southern drawl:

"The Doctor or Miss Joyce. I reckon you're the Northern gentleman who is staying here."

"Yes." Philip drew up a chair and they sat down. "My name's Weld. I'm sorry the folks are away. They ought to be back





"MY NAME'S DARRELL. MAYBE YOU'VE HEARD THEM SPEAK OF ME"

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very soon, though. They've gone to town." The other nodded.

"So Marietta told me. Funny I missed them. My name's Darrell. Maybe you've heard them speak of me."

Philip was thankful that his pipe was alight. Behind the cloud of smoke he answered quite calmly:

"Often. I'm glad to meet you."

The other acknowledged the compliment with a nod. Darrell had a good-looking, somewhat sallow face, with shrewd brown eyes and a loose, humorous mouth above a chin that was obstinate rather than strong. His hair was black and unruly. He looked keen and nervously forceful in spite of his languorous attitude and lazy drawl. From the moment of Philip's approach he had watched and studied him, and Philip gained the impression that Tom Darrell didn't approve of his presence at Mayberry. And Philip observed Darrell quite as frankly. He had to own that the chap was well-built and good-looking; and there was a romantic attraction about him apparent even to Philip.



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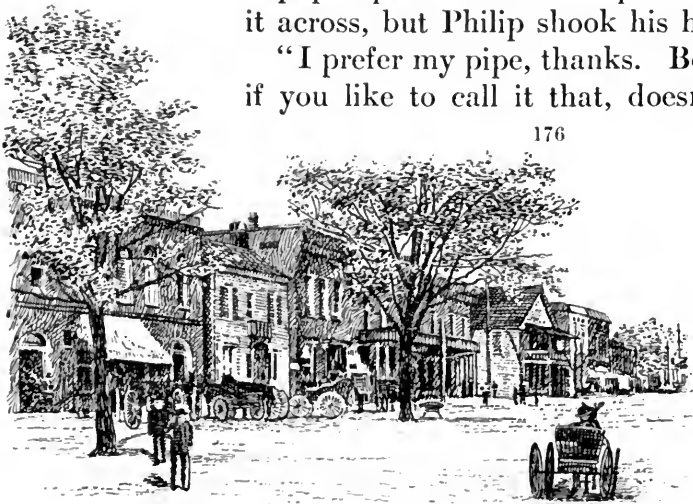
"I was stopping at the hotel in Ridge," Philip continued politely "and had an attack of grippe, followed by rheumatism. Doctor Mayberry was kind enough to ask me out here as his guest; seemed to think I needed a change of air. I fancy he was right, too. Anyway, I've certainly picked up fast since I came. Had to, anyway," he laughed, "if only out of gratitude. The Doctor and Miss Joyce have been awfully kind to me, you see."

"It's been a pleasure to them, I'm sure," responded Darrell courteously. "The Old Doctor is a mighty fine sort, Mr. Weld."

"You're right. He couldn't have been nicer to me if I'd been his own son." A little twitch at one corner of Darrell's mouth caused Philip to suspect that he had been awkward in his selection of a simile.

"He's kind to everybody," responded Darrell. "That's one thing that's kept him poor. Have a cigarette?" He produced a paper packet from his pocket and held it across, but Philip shook his head.

"I prefer my pipe, thanks. Being—poor, if you like to call it that, doesn't seem to



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trouble him much, though, Mr. Darrell. He's a good deal more contented than some wealthy men I know."

Darrell nodded as he flicked his match away.

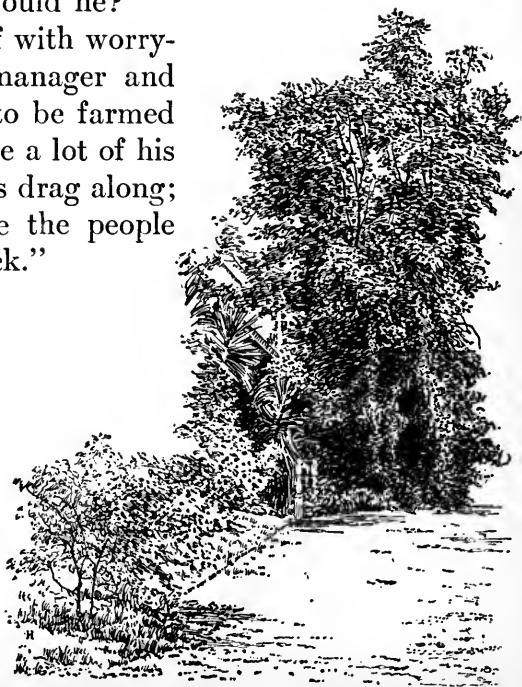
"He's like that. It's rather a question of ambition, I reckon. He doesn't mind. It's a shame, too. Mayberry used to be one of the big estates hereabouts. Now look at it!"

"It's still very charming," said Philip with a smile. Darrell shrugged impatiently.

"You talk like a Southerner," he replied. "I thought you Northerners were more practical."

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose some of us are able to appreciate charm. I dare say if the Doctor were a Northerner he'd worry himself into dyspepsia over this place. But he wouldn't be any happier, would he?"

"Not if he contented himself with worrying. But if he got a good manager and farmed this place as it ought to be farmed he'd make it pay. But he's like a lot of his generation, content to let things drag along; blind to possibilities. They're the people that are holding the South back."



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Philip smiled. "Let me see, you're in the agricultural implement business, aren't you?" he asked.

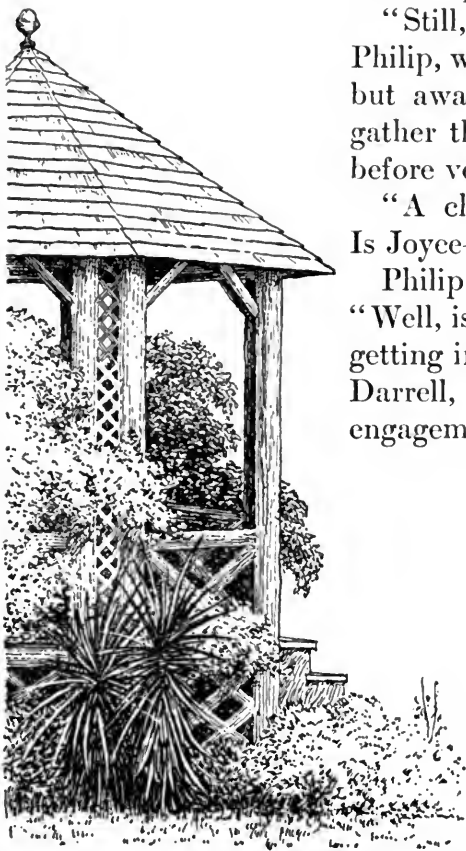
Tom Darrell laughed.

"Yes, but I've long since given up the idea of selling to the Old Doctor. Shucks, there are hundreds of places like this in this one state alone! It's enough to make a man crazy to see some of them and talk to the owners." He tossed his cigarette away half-consumed and lighted another. "As I say, the Old Doctor's happy enough, but it's hard on Cousin Joyce. She doesn't see any one to speak of and never gets anywhere."

"Still, she seems pretty happy, too," said Philip, watching the smoke from his pipe, but aware of Darrell's scrutiny. "And I gather that there is to be a change for her before very long, Mr. Darrell."

"A change? What do you mean, sir? Is Joyce—going away?"

Philip turned and smiled across at him. "Well, isn't she?" he asked. "Perhaps I'm getting in wrong, though. The fact is, Mr. Darrell, Miss Joyce has mentioned her engagement to me."



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"Her engagement?" asked Darrell sharply.

"Yes. If there is any secret about it I'm sorry I spoke of it. But as I have, why, let me tell you that I congratulate you very heartily, Mr. Darrell, very sincerely."

"Ah!" Darrell's gaze dropped to his cigarette and there was a moment's silence. Then,

"She mentioned—this—recently?" he asked.

"Perhaps a week ago; I hardly remember."

"It doesn't matter. It—in a way it is a secret, Mr. Weld, but there's no reason why you shouldn't know it."

"Thanks. I don't want to intrude, you know, but I've got to considering myself a—well, a sort of friend of the family, you know."

"Of course," answered the other vaguely. He showed no desire to continue with the subject and for a moment there was silence. Philip saw that he was frowning thoughtfully behind his cigarette, and afterwards, during the conversation that followed, he was plainly distraught. It was a relief to Philip



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when the sound of the buggy reached him from down the lane.

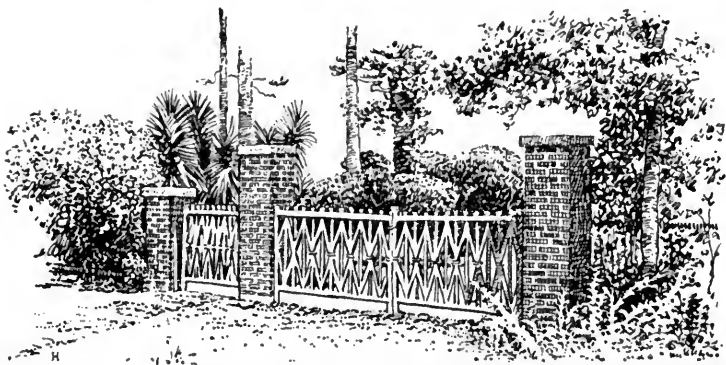
"They're coming now," he said, getting up. "I suppose I'll see you at dinner, Mr. Darrell."

"Yes." Darrell arose politely and stood until Philip had disappeared inside the house, looking after him with a puzzled frown on his face. "What the devil did he mean?" he muttered. "Well——" He shrugged his shoulders and went down the steps to meet the carriage.

In the cool gloom of his bed-room, Philip seated himself on the couch and, putting elbows on knees, stared fixedly at the floor.

"That settles it," he murmured. "It's time to get out. He isn't half good enough for her, though, and he won't make her happy; he's self-centered and conceited. Still, what fellow would be good enough? After all, I suppose it doesn't much matter what a chap is really like. It's what the girl thinks he's like that counts."

He arose, walked to the end of the room, dragged his trunk from the wall and threw open the lid.



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"I might as well pack this thing now," he thought.

But instead of packing he wandered back to the couch and took up his former attitude. And when dinner-time came it found him still there, staring blankly at the floor.



XVI.

At dinner Philip tried to give the announcement of his departure a casual tone, but only succeeded in making it sound ridiculously portentous. There was a startled glance from Joyce, a polite, disinterested look from Tom Darrell, and a courteous protest from the Old Doctor. It was a great mistake, he declared, to return North so early. Why not wait for another week or so? Or had Philip tired of humdrum Mayberry?

"Tired of it!" replied Philip. "No, indeed! Why, I'm getting more fond of it every day. But I ought to get back. And now that I'm no longer on the sick-list—thanks to you, sir—I've no excuse for imposing on you and Miss Joyce any longer."

"You always have sufficient excuse," returned the Old Doctor gently. "The pleasure you give us, sir, by accepting our hospitality."

"Thank you, Doctor. But you recall the



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Scotchman's excuse for leaving the poker game at which he was losing money? 'I'll be going now,' he said, 'for I ken ye'll miss me sair.' I guess I'll go before you get tired of me."

"I take it, though," observed Darrell, "that the Scotchman left because he was losing. Has the Doctor been winning your money, sir, at bezique?"

"If we'd played for money I'd have had to go long since," laughed Philip. "No, I've won rather than lost at Mayberry, Mr. Darrell, won two very dear friends, as I hope."

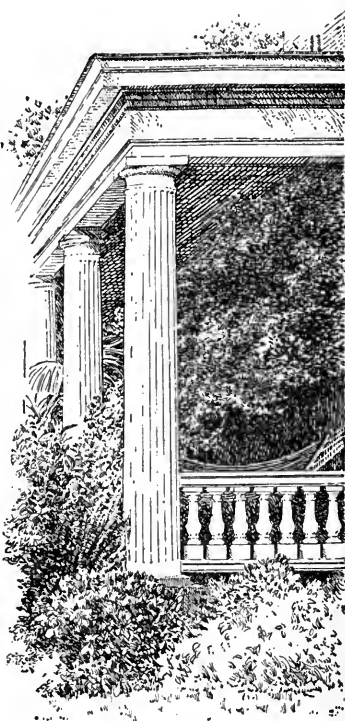
"And lost not even your heart?" asked Darrell. "Come, come, Cousin Joyce, what have you been doing?"

Joyce shook her head and sighed regretfully.

"I did my best, Tom," she answered, "but I reckon Mr. Weld left a sweetheart up North."

"And I reckon he's the first man ever escaped you, Joyce," said Darrell.

"Ah, but I haven't escaped," declared Philip lightly. "Miss Joyce is charitably



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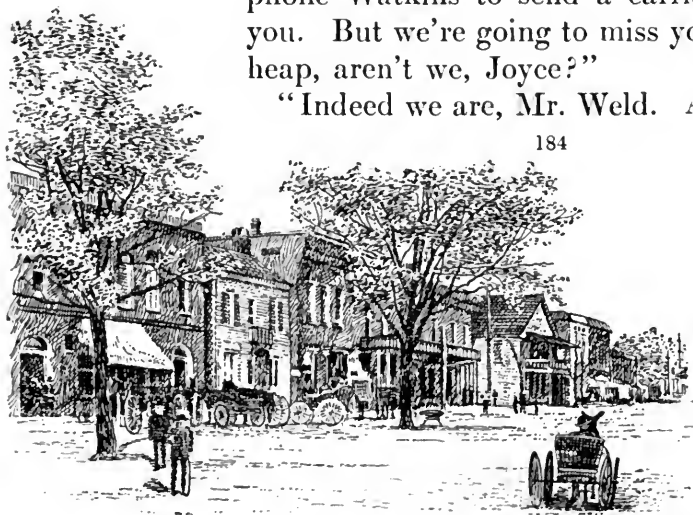
trying to hide my lacerated heart. As for the lady up North, why, I think a chap ought to have sweethearts North and South!"

"That reminds me of Black George that used to drive for Watkins," said the Old Doctor. "He came down here from Virginia and married a woman, and she found out that he'd left a wife up there and so she had him up in court. 'George,' said the Judge, 'this woman says you've got a wife in Virginia. How about that, you rascal?' 'That ain't so, Jedge. I done got a divorce.' 'Divorce? How did you get it?' 'Why, Jedge, when Ah come away Ah jes divorce myself from her presence!' "

"Well, I think I'll divorce myself from your presence in the morning, Doctor," laughed Philip, "if I can find some one to take me and my things to Ridge. Then I can get the afternoon train out for the North."

"Well, sir, if you insist on going I'll telephone Watkins to send a carriage out for you. But we're going to miss you a mighty heap, aren't we, Joyce?"

"Indeed we are, Mr. Weld. And I think



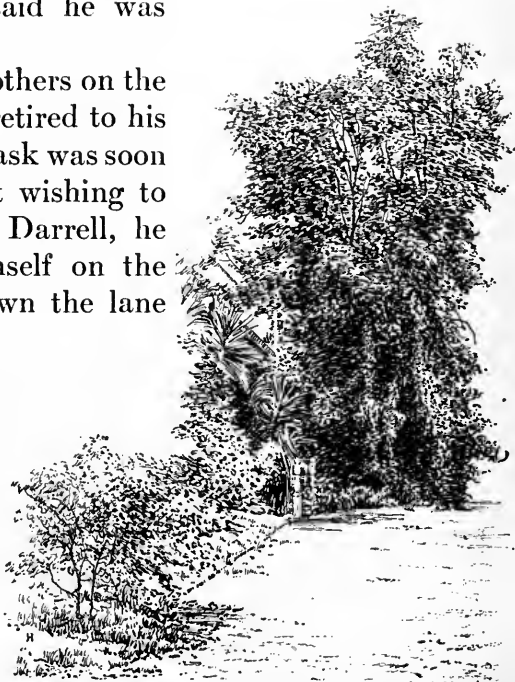
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it's awfully mean of you to run away now. Why, Ajax never will forgive you if you aren't here for his wedding!"

"I'll have to square myself with a wedding present, then, I guess. And I might send my card to the reception!"

And so it was settled that Philip was to leave in the morning, and now, with the die cast, he found himself wishing that he was going to remain. After all, things were not very different from what they had been before last night. He had acted foolishly, but there was no reason for supposing he couldn't behave himself hereafter. And now that Darrell had appeared on the scene surely Joyce would be happy enough to find it in her heart to forgive him a moment's madness. However, he had said he was going and go he would.

He excused himself from the others on the porch shortly after dinner and retired to his room to pack his things. That task was soon accomplished. Afterwards, not wishing to intrude upon Joyce and Tom Darrell, he found a book and settled himself on the couch to read. Ajax came down the lane



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with the Doctor's buggy and a minute after he saw it disappearing toward the road. His attention refused to be held by the story, and presently he laid the book aside and wandered out onto the side porch. At that moment Joyce and Tom Darrell came into sight from the front of the house on their way down the lane. Joyce saw him and stopped.

"Don't you want to come for a walk?" she called.

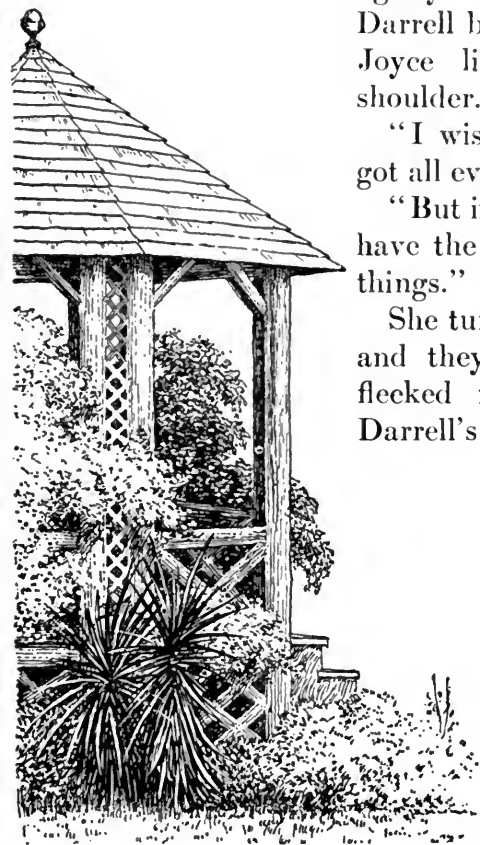
Philip smiled and shook his head.

"No time for loitering," he answered lightly. "I'm a man of affairs to-day." Darrell busied himself selecting a cigarette. Joyce lingered, looking back over her shoulder.

"I wish you would," she said. "You've got all evening to pack."

"But if I get it done now, Miss Joyce, I'll have the rest of the evening for pleasanter things."

She turned away slowly, Darrell nodded, and they went on down the green, sun-flecked nave. There was something in Darrell's bearing that puzzled Philip. He



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didn't look at all like a happy lover. Even during dinner, now that Philip recalled it, Darrell had been extremely undemonstrative; at times quite inattentive. Well, thought Philip, that was probably because he was so sure of her, hang him! But if Philip could have heard what was being said down there under the oaks he would have possessed a better understanding of Darrell's behavior.

"Did you have a good trip, Tom?" Joyce was asking.

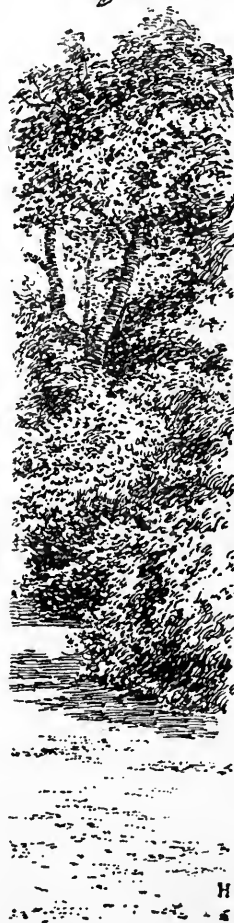
"Fairly good. The price of cotton is scaring the planters a heap, though. Lots of them declare they won't put in more than half a crop."

"That's a shame," murmured Joyce. They went on in silence for a little way. Then she turned and looked at him with a tiny frown. "Tom," she said, "I reckon there's something I ought to tell you."

"And I've got something to tell you, Joyce," he replied. "Let's hear yours first, though."

"No, you tell first," she said eagerly.

"Mine will keep. And I reckon I know what you're going to say, Joyce."



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"You do? What is it?" she asked.

"That you've decided to say yes at last. Have you, Joyce?"

"What makes you think that?" she asked curiously.

"Something that fellow said this morning."

"Something Mr. Weld said? What was it, Tom?"

"That—you told him we were engaged. Did you?"

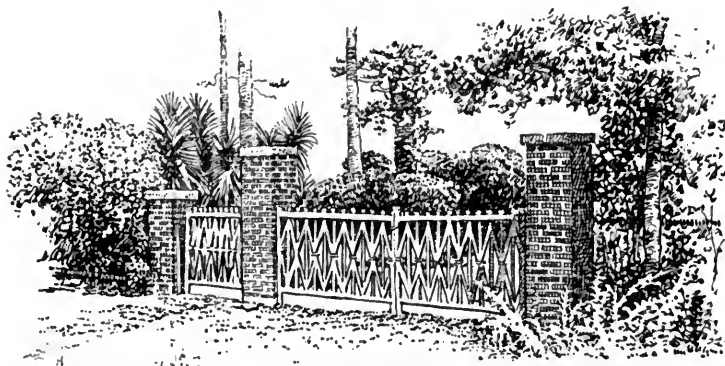
"Mh—mh." She nodded, shooting a glance at him from under her lashes. Darrell walked ahead, hands in pockets, eyes on the ground before him. A little puzzled frown crept into Joyce's forehead. "You don't seem very pleased about it," she said aggrievedly.

"Pleased! Of course I'm pleased!" he replied with a start. "It's—wonderful, Joyce. But I hadn't expected it, and—and—well, I reckon it's sort of taken my breath away."

"Oh," said Joyce doubtfully.

"Why didn't you write to me and tell me?" he asked.

"Write and say that I had made up my



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mind to marry you?" she laughed. "You might never have come back!"

"Well, you told Weld."

"That was different. It—was necessary."

"You mean that he made love to you? I was pretty sure he was spoons on you, Joyce. He seems a right decent kind of a chap—for a Northerner."

"Does he? Does that mean that you want me to accept him?"

"Accept him! Why, of course not! You think of the silliest things!" He laughed shortly with a trace of impatience.

"I told Mr. Weld because it was necessary. I haven't said that he has made love to me, but I didn't want him to think that I was—was after him, Tom, and it might have looked that way, you see, when Uncle Cass asked him out here to stay."

Darrell nodded.

"So you knew before—when I went away—that you were going to accept me?" he asked thoughtfully.

Joyce stopped.

"Tom Darrell," she said sternly, "turn around here and look at me." He obeyed.



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Now, what is it? You've wanted me to be engaged to you for a long time and now when I tell you that we *are* engaged you—you look as though you'd heard your death-warrant! Don't you want me any more, Tom?"

"Indeed I do, Joyce dear." His eyes softened and he took her hands. He would have kissed her, but she drew away. "You've made me very happy and I'll be mighty good to you, little girl." The smile died out of his eyes. "Always," he added with emphasis, as though trying to convince himself as well as her.

"And you're really, awfully, frightfully happy, Tom?" she demanded.

"Awfully, Joyce!"

"And you want to marry me more than anything in the whole world?"

"More than anything!" he answered, meeting her gaze without a tremor. Joyce laughed softly and drew her hands away.

"Who is she, Tom?" she whispered.

A wave of color flared into his face.

"She?" he stammered. "What—what do you mean?"



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Oh, Tom dear," she answered, "you're as transparent as—as a man! You've been and gone and fallen in love with somebody and you don't care for poor me any more."

"Joyce! I swear——!"

"Hush! Come over here to the fence. I want to tell you something, something that will make you awfully happy." She led the way to the fence, hidden here by the glossy foliage of a Cherokee rose, and seated herself on the stump of a tree. Darrell followed her in silence and stood waiting while she smoothed her skirts about her slim knees and gathered her thoughts together. Finally she looked up, a tiny mischievous smile dimpling the corners of her mouth.

"I'm going to give you your freedance, Tom, as the negroes say."

"But I don't want——"

"It's nice of you to lie about it," she interrupted, "but it isn't necessary. Now listen, Tom. I told Mr. Weld that I was engaged to you because, as I've said, I didn't want him to think that Uncle Cass and I were getting him out here to have him fall in love with me and marry me. You



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

see, Tom, he has a whole lot of money; or, anyway, his people have; and that made it worse, don't you see? So I put on mama's engagement ring and when he asked me I—I just fibbed to him. No, I didn't exactly fib, either, because I really meant that I was engaged to you, and I'd have married you if you'd wanted me to, only——”

The color crept into her cheeks and Darrell, seeing, understood.

“Joyce!” he cried. “You—Weld——”

She looked up shyly and nodded, smiling and blushing. Then she pressed her hands to her cheeks and dropped her gaze.

“But we're not engaged, Tom. He thinks, you see, that you and I——”

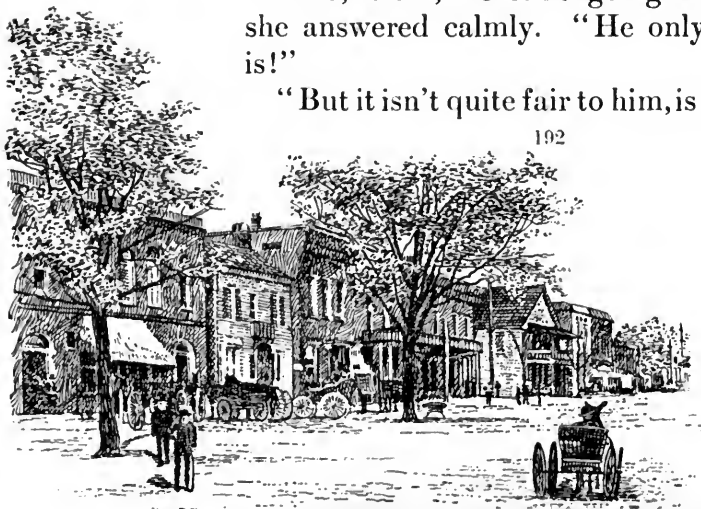
“But I'll tell him we're not!” cried Darrell eagerly.

“You'll do nothing of the sort! He must find out himself!”

“But he's going away, and you've told him that you *are* engaged to me, Joyce.”

“No, Tom, he isn't going away—yet,” she answered calmly. “He only thinks he is!”

“But it isn't quite fair to him, is it, Joyce?”



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

Joyce laughed softly. "Women never are *quite* fair to men, are they, Tom? If we were you wouldn't like us. And we wouldn't be—us!"

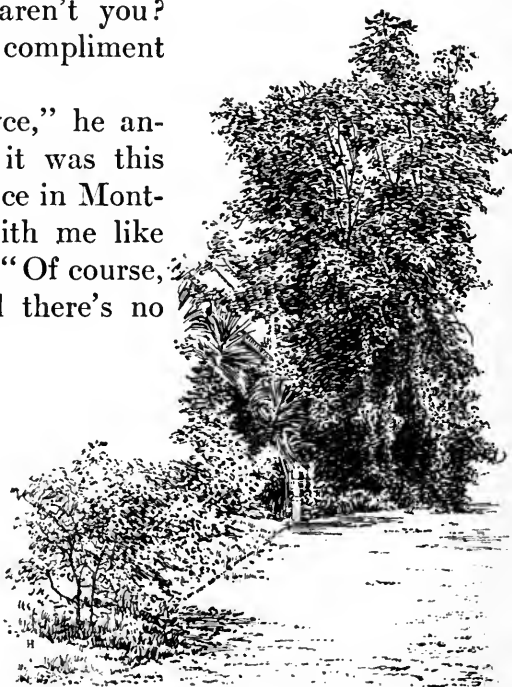
"But, Joyce——"

"It's all right, Tom. I've told you because—oh, because I reckon I had to tell somebody and you've always been more like a nice big brother to me than anything else. But you mustn't try to help, Tom; it's just his affair and mine. And I reckon," she added, smiling inscrutably into the shadows, "we'll manage it all right." After a moment she said: "And now our engagement is quite broken, isn't it?"

"I reckon so," replied Darrell with a laugh.

"And you're heartbroken, aren't you? You ought to be, Tom, just as a compliment to me."

"I—I'm afraid I'm not, Joyce," he answered radiantly. "You see, it was this way, Joyce. I met her at a dance in Montgomery and it was all over with me like that!" He snapped his fingers. "Of course, though, Joyce, you understand there's no



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

engagement between us. There was *you*, you see. You'd refused me half a dozen times, I reckon, but I thought that—in a way——”

“I understand,” said Joyce as he hesitated. “That was—sweet of you, Tom.”

“Nonsense! Besides, you mustn't think that—that I didn't care a heap for you, Joyce. Only—somehow—you wouldn't have me, and—and I saw her——”

“Of course,” she agreed. “Is she nice, Tom?”

“She's wonderful! I wish you could see her! But you will soon, because I'm going to get mother to ask her to Augusta for a visit.”

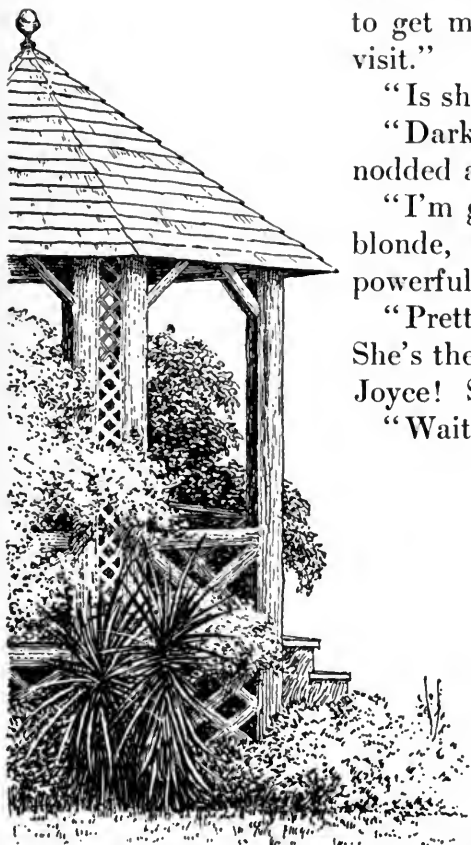
“Is she dark or fair, Tom?”

“Dark—like you, Joyce dear.” Joyce nodded approvingly.

“I'm glad of that. I'm glad she's not a blonde, Tom. And I reckon she's just powerful pretty?”

“Pretty!” he scoffed. “She's beautiful! She's the most beautiful thing in the world, Joyce! She's——”

“Wait, please! What time is it?”



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Why, a quarter past three," answered Darrell, consulting his watch. "Why?"

Joyce glanced up the lane toward the house. Then she looked up at Darrell.

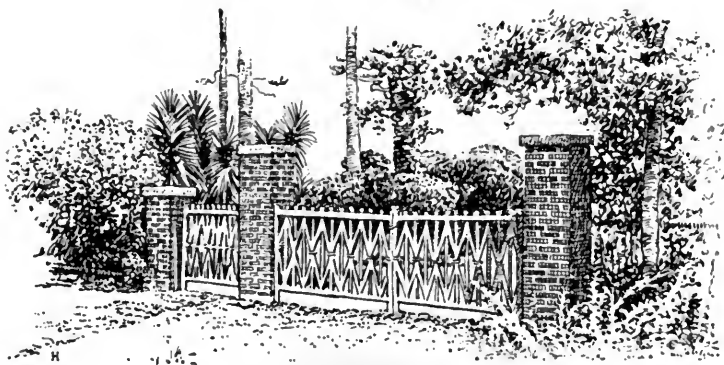
"I can give you half an hour, Tom," she said. "Can you tell me about her in that time?"

"I'll try," he laughed.



XVII.

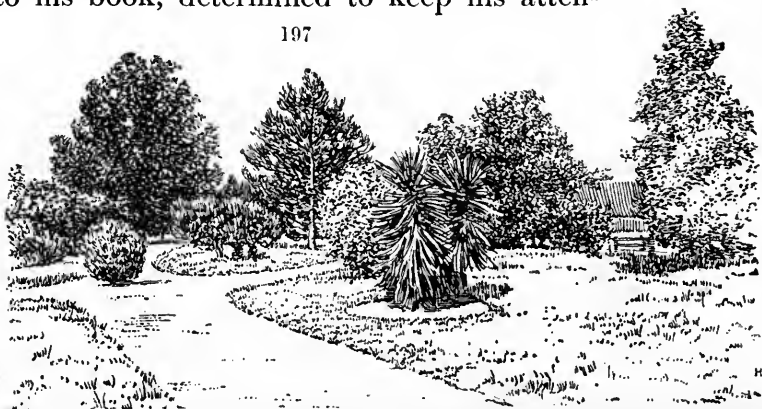
WHEN, later in the afternoon, Philip met the lovers again it was all explained to him, or so he thought. They had had a tiff soon after Darrell's arrival and now they had made up. There was no mistaking the happiness that shone from both of them. Darrell was, in fact, so blatantly joyful that Philip wanted to kick him, while Joyce, though making less display of her ecstasy, caused all sorts of grim, uncharitable emotions to surge within him. They sat on the porch together for an hour before dinner, and Tom, as talkative now as he had been taciturn before, told amusing incidents of his travels. It was Philip who was tonguetied now. He consumed pipe after pipe and listened politely to the conversation and was so palpably miserable in spite of his efforts that Darrell, generous in his own new-found happiness, was heartily sorry for him and more than once sent a pleading look at Joyce. And perhaps Joyce was a



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

little sorry too; she should have been; but there was no relenting.

At six they went in to supper. The Old Doctor had telephoned that he would not be back until late and so Philip was forced to continue what he believed to be the uncongenial rôle of third person. Nothing was said about his departure. He resented that. Joyce, he told himself bitterly, was so preoccupied with Darrell that she had no thought for any one else. After all, though, she was probably rather glad that he was taking himself away. It wasn't a very merry meal for Philip and he was glad when it was over and they were back on the porch in the soft twilight. After one pipe he excused himself. Both Darrell and Joyce were extremely polite about it, he considered; if he hadn't known that they were aching to get rid of him he might very well have supposed them eager for his society. He went to his room and put a few things in his bag for want of better occupation, knowing very well that he would have to take them out again in the morning. Then he went back to his book, determined to keep his atten-



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tion on it. But every few minutes a laugh floated around the corner of the porch to him and he lost all connection with the story. It was after nine when Joyce called from the hall:

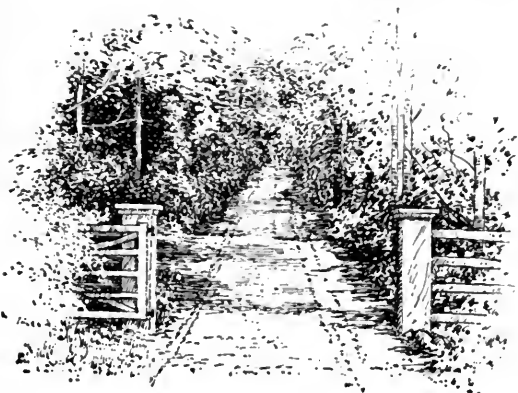
"Mr. Darrell is going, and wants to say good-night to you."

He joined them then and accompanied them outside to where Ajax was holding the horse. Darrell and Joyce merely shook hands. They had probably said good-night to each other before calling him from his room, Philip told himself. Then Darrell turned to Philip with outstretched hand.

"Good-night, Mr. Weld, I'm mighty glad to have met you, sir, and I hope I'll have the pleasure of seeing you again before long."

"Thanks," answered Philip politely, shaking hands, "but I'm afraid that's not likely. I leave to-morrow and may not be down this way again for some time."

Darrell sprang lightly into the saddle and gathered his reins. The moon, just topping the oaks, lighted his face and showed a broad smile.



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Oh, I reckon you'll think better about leaving to-morrow, Mr. Weld," he said. "Good-night!"

He waved his whip and cantered off down the lane into the gloom of the arching trees.

"What the deuce did he mean by that?" asked Philip irritably, turning to Joyce.

"I don't know," she answered.

Philip walked back toward the steps and she followed more slowly.

"That wasn't quite true," she said. "I do know, but I reckon I can't tell you."

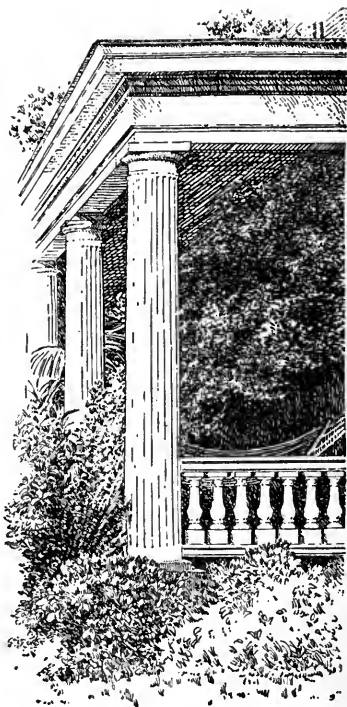
"It sounds quite mysterious," he said dryly. "Are you going in?"

"Are you?"

"I think so. Or shall we sit on the porch for a few minutes? This is my last appearance, you know, Miss Joyce."

"Really, Mr. Weld?" She laughed softly, mockingly. "Don't let's sit; let's walk down to the gate. Perhaps we shall meet Uncle."

He darted a look at her and frowned. It was rather heartless, he thought, to remind him of last night. But he turned and went beside her down the lane. As before,



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

little was said during the walk. At the gate Joyce lifted herself to the post.

"There's no jasmine to-night," she said. "I reckon it's all gone."

"Yes," he answered.

Standing there beside her in the white moonlight he felt very unhappy and a bit mutinous. Perhaps it was a realization of the latter fact that kept him well away from her. Not that there was the least danger of his acting the fool again, however!

"Philip," she said presently, "I've got something to show you." She held out one small white hand toward him. He drew nearer and looked wonderingly.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Don't—you see?" she whispered.

"Only your hand, Joyce."

"And it's no—different?"

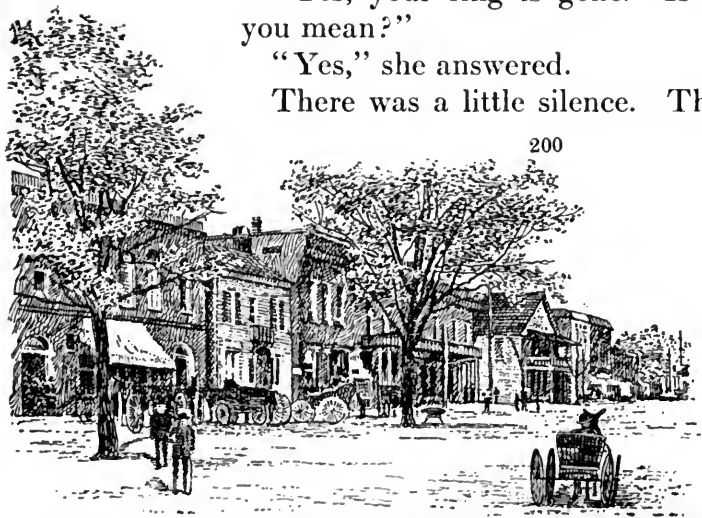
"I don't understand," he answered perplexedly.

"No different from—last night, I mean."

"Yes, your ring is gone. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes," she answered.

There was a little silence. Then,



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Why have you taken it off, Joyce?" he asked unsteadily. Somehow the hand was in his now, soft and warm and clinging.

"Because—because it didn't belong there," she answered.

"Didn't belong there?" he stammered.

"What do you mean? Joyce, for Heaven's sake, dear, tell me what you mean! Why do you look at me like—like that, Joyce? Am I dreaming, or—what does it mean?"

"The ring was my mother's, Philip," she whispered.

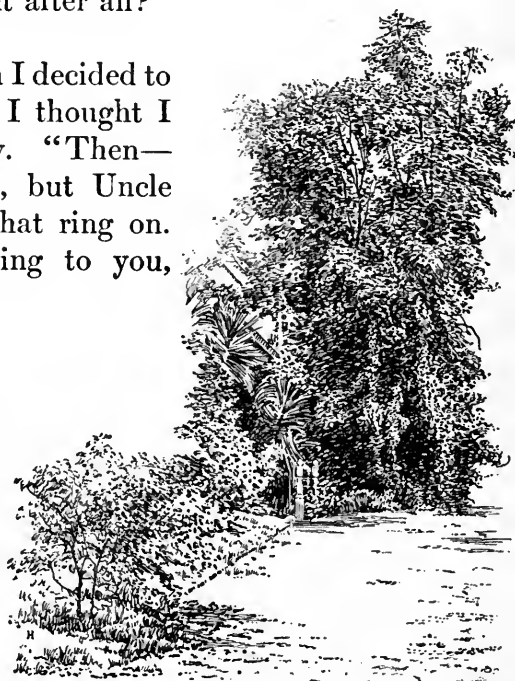
"Your mother's!" he cried bewilderedly.

"But you said——"

"I fibbed to you. I was afraid you'd think—that Uncle—that we had asked you out here to—to—oh, don't you understand?"

"Then there's no engagement after all?" he asked eagerly.

"There *was*, I reckon. When I decided to—to become engaged to Tom I thought I meant it!" She laughed softly. "Then—then I wanted to back down, but Uncle wouldn't let me. So I—put that ring on. Do you hate me for—for lying to you, Philip?"



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Hate you! Oh, Joyce—sweetheart—I——" But he stopped with a puzzled look clouding the rapture in his face. "But the other day—in the summer-house, Joyce, you said you loved him more than anything in the world."

"I—I didn't say loved," she faltered; "I said cared."

"But it's the same! I don't understand——"

"And—and I said *him*, Philip, and—and there's only one *him*, you see."

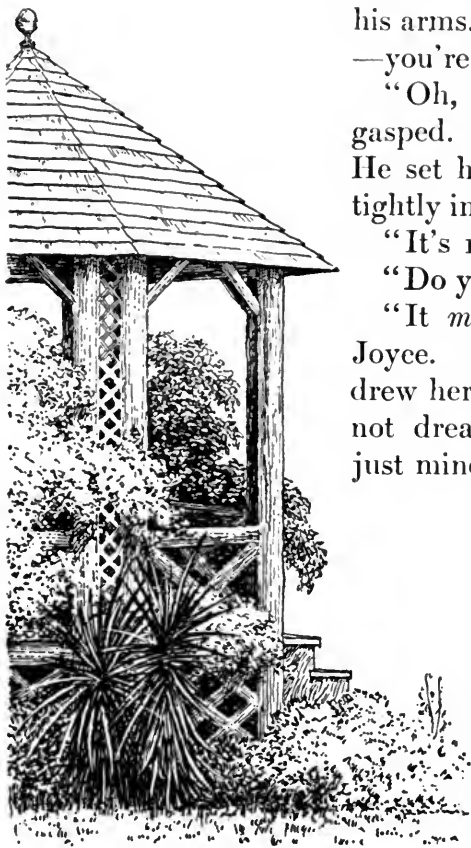
"Joyce!" he cried again. Reaching up, he lifted her from the gate and held her in his arms. "Then it's me? Really? You're—you're not playing with me, Joyce?"

"Oh, please set me down, Philip," she gasped. "You make me feel so—so *little*!" He set her on her feet, but held her hands tightly in his.

"It's really me, dear?" he demanded.

"Do you—want it to be?" she whispered.

"It *must* be! I can't do without you, Joyce. I love you so, sweetheart." He drew her closer to him. "Tell me that I'm not dreaming, Joyce dearest; that you're just mine and no one else's!"



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The brown eyes looked bravely up into his for an instant and then dropped slowly and he heard a laugh that was half a sigh.

"It isn't any dream, I reckon," she whispered. "If it is it's —it's an awfully sweet one, Philip."

A moment later she drew away from him, passing a hand over her rumpled hair. Her face looked very serious in the moonlight.

"Philip," she said, "did you think at first that—that we were after you? When Uncle asked you out here, I mean?"

"Never," he began stoutly, but paused then.

"Of course you did," she said, triumphantly. "I knew you would. I told Uncle so. That's why I —why I became engaged, don't you see, dear?"

"But when you saw that I cared for you and was so utterly miserable, Joyce, why didn't you tell me then?"

"How could I? But I did—try, Philip, as hard as I could. Didn't you ever think—suspect that I—that I—— *Didn't* you, Philip?"

"Not until just now, dear."



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

"Truly? How strange! Why, I thought I was—giving myself away all the time! Oh, but the worst thing is that—that I *did* try to get you after all!" Her eyes grew very big and round and horrified. "Philip, I—I've been making love to you!"

"Have you?" he laughed, kissing one of the hands he held. "How terrible!"

She laughed gently.

"Isn't it? But somehow I don't seem to care. And—and I got you, didn't I, my—my Big Boy?"

"Joyce," he said presently, "do you know what I'm going to do with you?" She shook her head meekly.

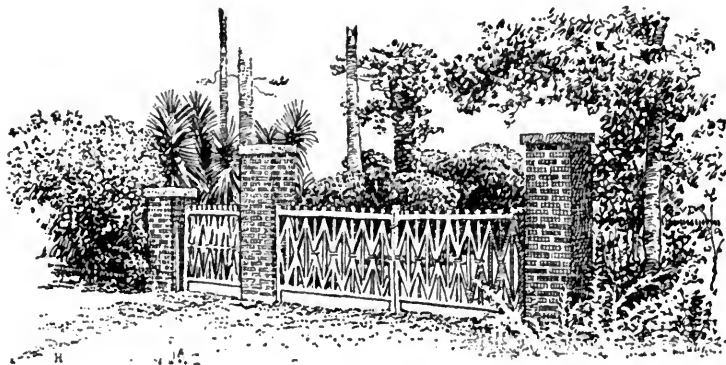
"I'm going to marry you at once—immediately—to-morrow! Anyhow, next week!"

"Thank you," said Joyce happily.

"Whoa!"

They drew apart, startled. A few yards away sat the Old Doctor in the buggy, his cigar glowing wanly in the moonlight.

"I didn't just like to run you down," he said dryly.



JOYCE OF THE JASMINES

Hand in hand they drew to the side of the lane, silently.

"Get ap, Sanford!" The buggy turned in and Sanford whinnied as the lights came into sight at the end of the lane.

"Reckon I wouldn't stay there too long in the moonlight," said the Old Doctor gravely, as he moved past them. "Moonlight's powerful dangerous, they tell me."

Then Joyce found her tongue.

"Uncle Cass," she cried.

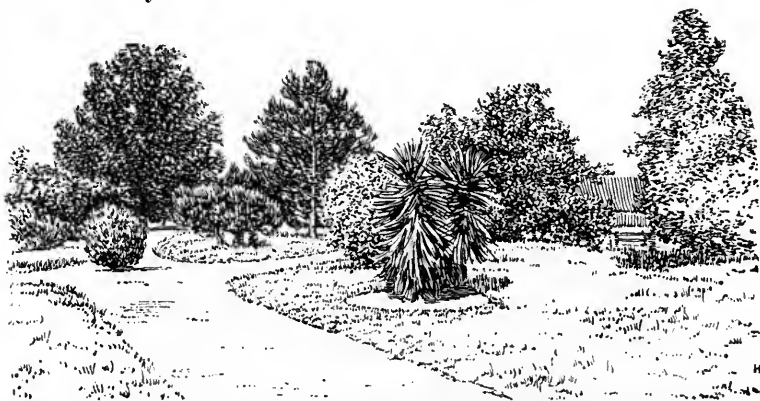
"Whoa there! Did you call, Joyce?"

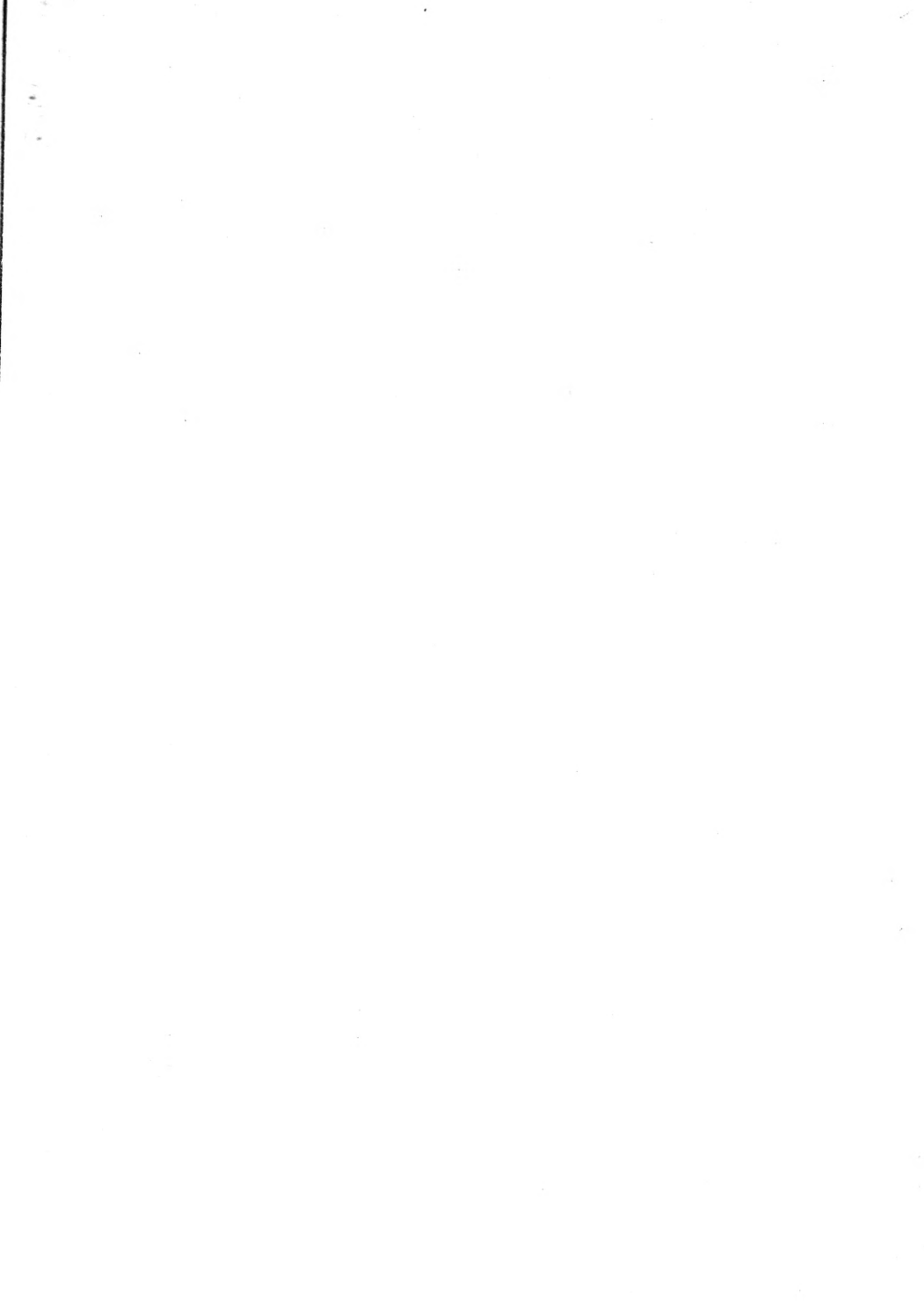
"Uncle Cass, do you know what's happened?" she asked.

"N—no, not exactly," replied the Old Doctor, his head around the side of the buggy, "but you can see a right good distance to-night."

"Marse Weld done 'nounce his 'gagement to Marse Doctor Maybah's Li'l Lady!"

"Little Lady," whispered Philip as the buggy mingled with the shadows at the head of the lane. "I may call you that now, mayn't I, sweetheart? Little Lady, my Little Lady!"









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